STUDENTS OF THE MONTH, 10 | HOLIDAY LIFE, 21 | SLICE OF LIFE, 42

rocky hill LIFE

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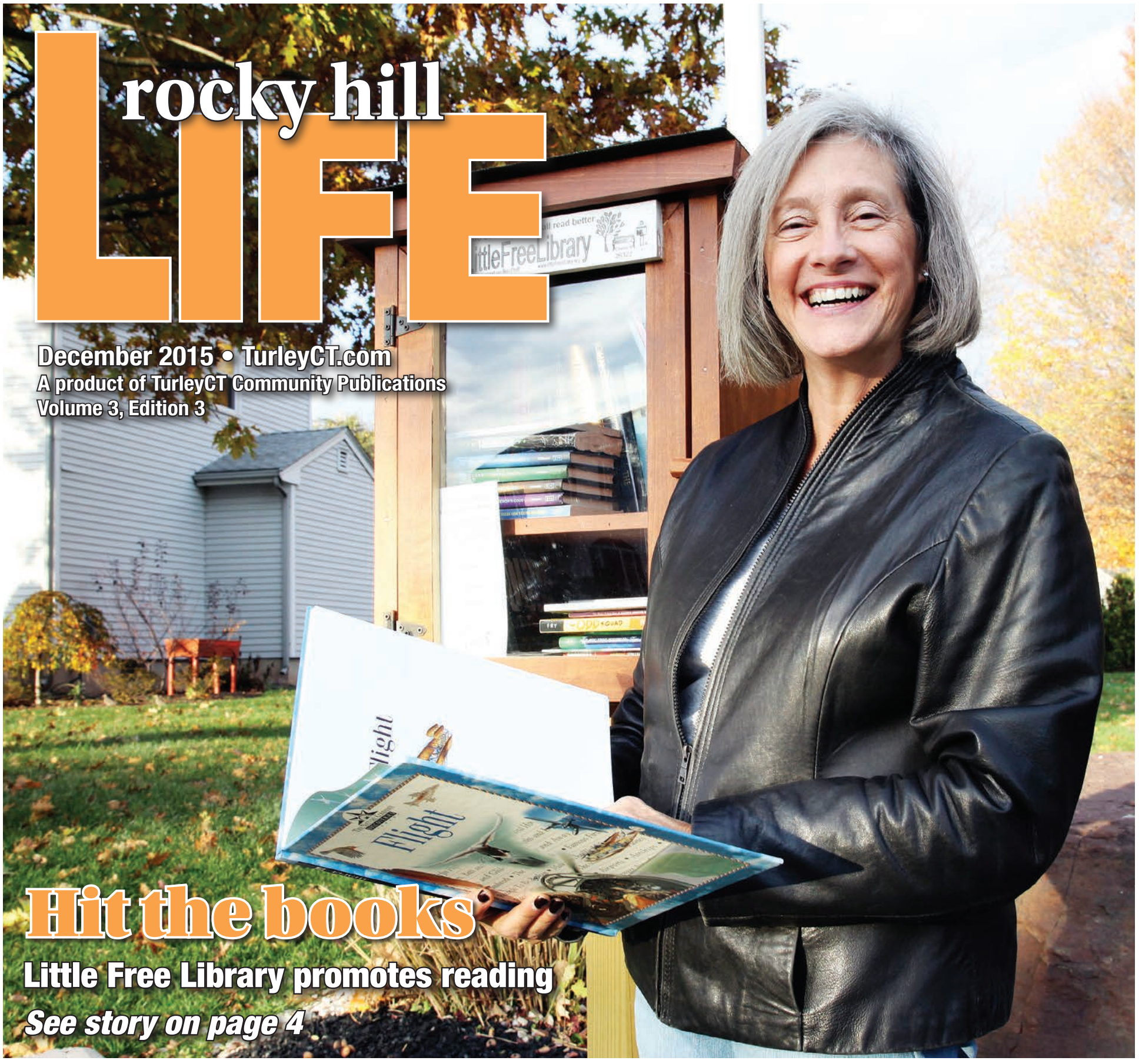

Hit the books

Little Free Library promotes reading

See story on page 4

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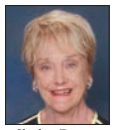
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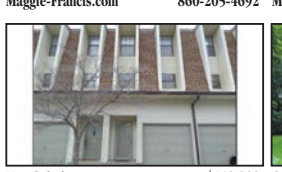
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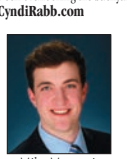
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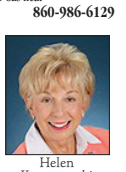
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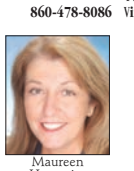
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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"The biggest things are your health and being social, and that's what we offer."
–Denise Sanderson

See story page 37

ON THE COVER

Laurie Boske enjoys sharing her love of reading with her Little Free Library, charter number 26322, which stands outside of her Highland Street home.

Photo by Lisa Brisson
See story page 4

6 Praying for a liver
8 LIFE in the classroom
10 Students of the month
12 A weather geek
18 A comforting guide
21 Holiday LIFE
39 Events spotlight
40 LIFE in the kitchen
42 Slice of LIFE
44 Fallfest
45 A new leash on LIFE
46 News roundup
53 Calendar

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The Little Free Library on Highland Street has already begun fulfilling its purpose of encouraging a love of reading in people young and old. Pictured, from left, are Kristina Arena, 11, Patrick Pettino, 7, Jimmy Thomas, 6, Shrushti Patel, 9 and Tess Thomas, 10.

Photo by Allie Rivera

Little Free Library

New outdoor literary structure encourages a love of reading

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

A group of children ran around amid the fallen leaves in Laurie Boske's yard. Nearby, neighbors and community members gathered over plates of cookies and apple cider.

It seemed like any ordinary neighborhood activity on Highland Street, but their reason for getting together was unique. Perched near the street stands Rocky Hill's first Little Free Library, a wooden structure that holds a variety of books for passersby to borrow.

"I just love the idea of promoting reading and community, and this is a perfect location because there are so many walkers," Boske said.

The Little Free Library is an international program that started in 2009. Todd Bol of Hudson, Wisc., built a small model of a little red school house in honor of his mother and placed it in his front yard, filled with books.

Neighbors and friends loved the kiosk and Bol soon began building more models and giving them away.

The concept of the Little Free Library is simple. Volunteers such as Boske register for a Little Free Library kit, post the structure in their yard or another public and accessible place, and fill it with books. Anyone is welcome to borrow or donate a book, and they can return it whenever they wish, without any checkout system.

For Boske, the journey to building the Little Free Library in her yard all began with a simple social media post.

"I saw someone post something about it on Facebook so I looked into it," she said. "I love books, I'm a school principal, so I loved the idea of free books for the community."

"I want this to encourage a love of reading, because it's so important."

–Laurie Boske

She ordered the Little Free Library kit, which included material for the structure, and soon enlisted the help of the custodians in her school to construct the post.

"Then there was the hard part. We had to dig the hole to put the cement in," she said with a laugh. "I learned we live on rocky hill, not in Rocky Hill."

Hoping to have the structure complete and ready for opening by the end of the summer, Boske asked her son to dig the hole, but his greatest efforts couldn't do the job. She eventually had to rent an auger to get through the tough ground.

Before fully installing the Little Free Library, she reached out to the Cora J. Belden Library to inform it of her efforts and was met with great enthusiasm for the project.

"I told everybody at the library and they all wanted to be involved," library Assistant Director Terri Morrissey said. "The goals of the Little Free Library are the same as the public library, which is to encourage reading."

Photo by Allie Rivera

Cora J. Belden Assistant Director Terri Morrissey, left, presents donated books to Little Free Library curator Laurie Boske.

Each Little Free Library looks a bit different, as those who install them are encouraged to personalize the structure for their community. Boske placed hers next to a small garden with a stone bench.

"I encourage people to sit and read," she said. "Truly, I welcome anybody. You can bring your friends."

At its Oct. 15 opening, the Little Free Library was already stocked with books for people of all ages thanks to donations from Boske as well as the public library. The goal is that those who utilize it will also bring books of their own to donate as they borrow others.

"It's a reciprocal kind of thing because not only will people be taking books they want, but they'll bring books that they want others to read," Morrissey said. "Hopefully we'll be able to continue the relationship and be able to provide more in the future."

For those in the neighborhood who have already begun to take advantage of the Little Free Library, having the structure so close has been both a convenience and a comfort.

"It's nice to have a place here to sit and just read for a little bit," neighbor Irene Macca said.

For the younger folks in the neighborhood, the Little Free Library has already begun to serve its purpose by encouraging a love of reading.

"I think it's great because instead of having to drive to the library I can just walk across the street," 10-year-old Tessa Thomas said.

"I like reading a lot more now because I can just walk here," Kristina Arena, 11, added. "I can sit and read with my friends so it's more fun."

Although this Little Free Library is the first in town, Boske said it does not need to be the only one. She hopes other residents will be encouraged to do something like this for the community as well.

"I hope that it will inspire others," she said.

Looking at the quaint structure in her yard and the neighbors who gathered in its celebration, Boske seemed content.

"I want this to encourage a love of reading, because it's so important," she said. "Even if you can't travel, you can read. Even if you don't have a job, you can read. I just want to share it with everybody, young and old." **RHL**

The Little Free Library is located at 18 Highland St. For more information on Little Free Libraries visit littlefreelibrary.org.

LIFE Quotes

Failure will never overtake me if my determination to succeed is strong enough.
Og Mandino

LET'S REMEMBER

Together

For some, it has been a difficult year and the holidays, traditionally a time of celebration, can magnify a tragedy or loss. We've found that remembering a loved one with a special tribute or a memorial service often helps families work through difficult times. If you have lost a loved one, please join us for our holiday program and we'll take a moment to remember and celebrate that life ... together.

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Photo by Mark Jahne

Dennis and Nancy Clair are anxiously awaiting a transplant that will provide him with a new liver. They are hoping to find a live donor.

Praying for a liver

Dennis Clair hopes for a donor who will save his life

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Dennis Clair of Rocky Hill has a rare liver disease. He's on the national registry to receive a transplanted organ when a compatible donor dies, but that may not be soon enough to save his life.

The waiting list is long, and many other patients are in line ahead of him. What he really needs is a living donor who will give him part of a liver to allow his to regenerate.

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In the meantime, his health continues to deteriorate. He is receiving treatment at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center as well as Yale-New Haven Hospital. He went to the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center to apply for an experimental drug study, but his illness was too advanced for him to participate.

Dennis, 65, was diagnosed with a condition called Alpha-1 Antitrypsin Deficiency. It is a genetic condition that was discovered when a biopsy was conducted following the removal of his gall bladder.

His wife, Nancy, said they were told that this deficiency is not fatal and rarely affects the liver, but in his case, it did.

According to the U.S. National Library of Medicine, only 15 percent of adults diagnosed with this condition have problems with their livers. It is most common in people of European ancestry.

A retired sales executive, Dennis was once an athlete who later coached in the Jaycee Courant baseball league. He recently took what he called a "bucket list" trip to Wrigley Field for a Chicago Cubs baseball game and South Bend, Indiana, for a University of Notre Dame football game.

"I can go for a walk as long as the weather's decent," he said. "I was a high school basketball official for 25 years."

He vomited blood one day five years ago, which was initially misdiagnosed as a bleeding ulcer. Nancy said her husband's liver and kidneys are not functioning well and that his body is retaining fluids, thus requiring a low salt diet. He has lost muscle mass and is prone to infections that require inpatient hospital care.

"This could be a very long process," she said. "It helped that he was in really good shape before this started."

"We're trying to find a live donor," Dennis added.

Nancy explained that there are various components that determine how people waiting for a liver move up or down the transplant list. A person's score determines their ranking, and that can be affected by a bout of illness.

Dennis said he doesn't know how he would have dealt with all of this without the tireless support of his wife.

"She's an advocate, fights with the insurance companies. If I didn't have her, I'd be lost."

–Dennis Clair

"She's an advocate, fights with the insurance companies," he said. "If I didn't have her, I'd be lost."

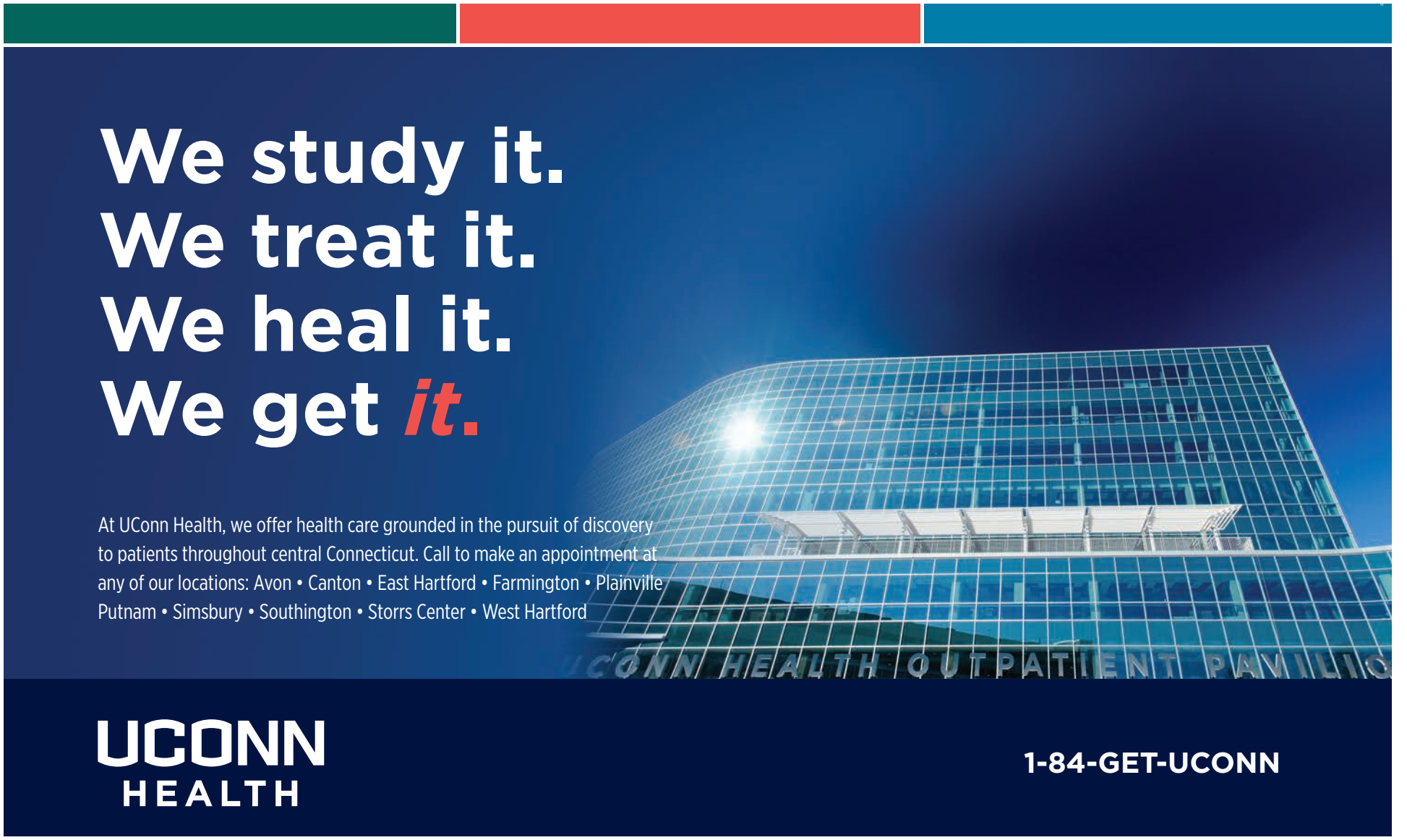
"They code everything incorrectly," she added.

The couple knows they may have to travel to find a compatible liver. They are ready to do whatever it takes to keep Dennis alive.

The family recently took a vacation to Disney World in Florida while he was still healthy enough to handle the trip.

The Clairs have lived in Rocky Hill for 39 years. Nancy was a part-time teacher and tutor at Griswold Middle School. The family worships at St. James Church. Children Brendan and Megan, now adults, attended the Rocky Hill Public Schools. **RHL**

To learn more, visit the Donate for Dennis page on Facebook. Anyone interested in serving as a living donor is encouraged to call the Yale-New Haven Hospital Transplant Center at 866-925-3897.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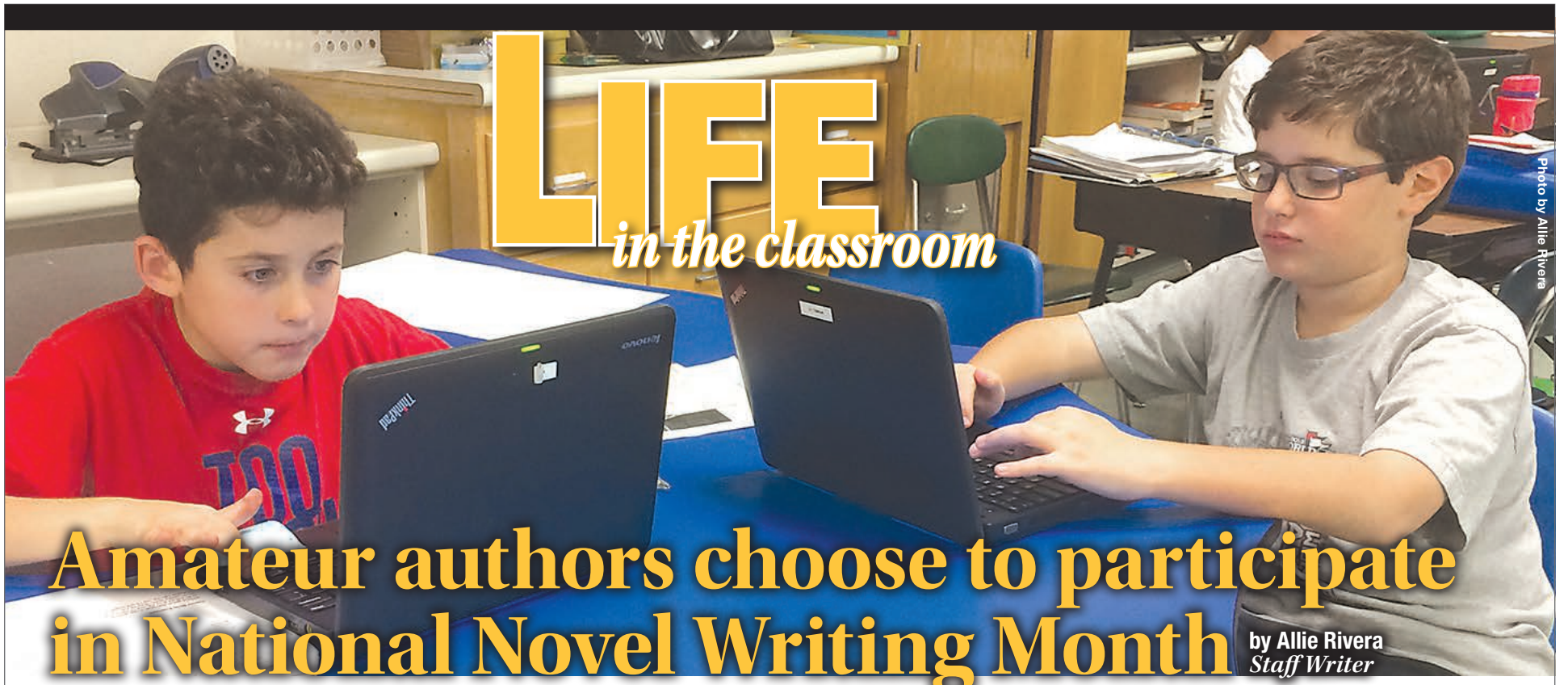

LIFE *in the classroom*

Amateur authors choose to participate in National Novel Writing Month

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Photo by Allie Rivera

Nine-year-old Aidan Boutin, left, and Tyler Turner, 10, are hard at work on their novels for National Novel Writing Month.

November is a month of changing leaves and Thanksgiving preparations. But for many writers across the globe, it's also a time to start and finish creating an entire novel. Fifth grade students at West Hill School now get the chance to be a part of that.

National Novel Writing Month, or NaNoWriMo, started in 1999 and became a registered non-profit organization in 2005. It encourages amateur and professional writers from around the world to write a 50,000-word novel starting on Nov. 1 and ending by Nov. 30.

This program has been the force behind such popular titles as Sara Gruen's "Water for Elephants" and Erin Morgenstern's "The Night Circus."

Last year, fifth grade language arts teachers Angela Jones and Jennifer Rowe had their students participate in the NaNoWriMo Young Writers Program.

"They're able to make their own word count goal," Jones said.

Students who meet or exceed their word goal by the end of the month will get one free published copy of their novel with a cover they get to design themselves.

"They really feel like actual writers, because they are," Jones said.

"I really loved that I can make my own story," fifth-grader Toriana Grooms, 11, said. "I've always wanted to become an author and now I

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get a chance to see how it all forms and how you create a book. It's really amazing."

While Jones said the program was a mandatory assignment for all fifth-graders last year, this year it is optional. Both Jones and Rowe found a positive response from their classes.

Roughly 54 students, more than half of West Hill's fifth grade population, chose to participate in NaNoWriMo this year. Some time is devoted to writing during the school day, but most of the hours spent on this project are completed at home.

Jones suggested to her students that they write for 20 to 30 minutes each night and many of them eagerly accepted that challenge.

"I had a bunch of kids say, 'can we do more than that?'" Jones said with a small laugh. "I told them of course."

Both teachers said they have already seen students getting excited about their novels and taking ownership of their work.

"We'll sit with them and say, explain why you're doing this dialogue here, or what's happening," Jones said. "They'll say to us 'I'm at the climax' or 'this is the rising action.' It's great to hear from them."

"They have such ownership over it," Reading Consultant Sharon Truex said. "They're taking what they've learned about narrative writing and it's much more effective for them to get to actually use it."

In addition to strengthening their skills as writers, the teachers said they have seen positive results in the children's reading skills as well.

"They're really thinking of themselves as authors."
–Angela Jones

"It also raises the way that they read because they are looking to see, how did an author do this," Jones said. "They're really thinking of themselves as authors."

"There's a link between the Readers' and Writers' Workshop," Rowe added.

Jones and Rowe have other assignments with a similar writing component for those students who chose not to participate in NaNoWriMo.

"I'm having them do a research project of their choice," Rowe said. "They're going to be researching a topic that they're passionate about, analyzing different points of view and learning about authors' bias."

She added that student topics will be specific, for example, researching training methods for dogs instead of simply writing about dogs, and will allow the researchers to become an expert on a topic.

"It's really about creating opportunities to develop a passion," Jones said.

With both the research project and the participation in NaNoWriMo, passion is the driving force behind student learning.

"When you really understand something, it's because you have a passion, and that's what they're trying to get these kids to do," Truex said. "It's about knowing what's it's like to really understand something." RHL

Here are some of the novels printed by West Hill School fifth-graders in recent years.

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Students of the month

Rocky Hill High School seniors are buddies with everyone they meet

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Left: Seniors Jessica Greenspan and Trevor Whalen are athletes, Student Council members and vice president and president of the Best Buddies club. **Right:** Trevor and Jessica had the opportunity to travel to Indiana University over the summer for the Best Buddies Leadership Conference. They were able to attend workshops on working with special needs students as well as meet Best Buddies founder Anthony Kennedy Shriver, right, and 'Glee' actress Lauren Potter.

For Trevor Whalen and Jessica Greenspan, their time in high school is about more than just grades or athletic accomplishments. It's about giving back to others.

Both 17-year-old seniors at Rocky Hill High School, they serve as the president and vice president, respectively, of the school's Best Buddies program, an international organization that works to pair students with disabilities with their typical peers in both academic and social environments.

"It's about students volunteering to help out kids with special needs," Trevor said. "Working with the students makes you want to help out and make their day better."

Both leaders said they initially joined the club to help others, but the positive benefits were not only felt by their peers with disabilities.

"I worked in the special ed room with one of the students and it was just so much fun," Jessica said. "If you're having a bad day, you go hang out with them and your whole day is turned around."

Trevor and Jessica help to organize the club's monthly meetings where they plan future activities and potential fundraisers to help defray the cost of those activities. There are around 85 students signed up as members of Best Buddies, though Trevor said that not all show up for the monthly meetings.

He also said that the club has 11 matches, which are one-to-one friendship pairings between a student with special needs and typical volunteer.

They are matched with students who they see both in and out of school.

"Sometime we'll go to the movies, or we've gone out to breakfast and then done a bunch of things together," Trevor said.

At the beginning of October, both Trevor and Jessica worked to plan and carry out one of the club's largest events. For the first time, Best Buddies hosted a Wiffle ball tournament as a fundraiser.

"Last year we did a volleyball tournament and we made a lot of money," Trevor said.

The tournament attracted people

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from Rocky Hill and surrounding towns on 13 different teams to compete in a day of friendship and fun. Participants were not limited to students and included former mayor Henry Vasel, RHHS Principal Mario Almeida and Superintendent of Schools Mark Zito.

"It was a really cold day," Jessica said. "The fact that it was freezing and everybody still showed up was great."

The tournament raised $580 for the Best Buddies club.

"This money is going toward when we do events, like our Halloween party coming up, or if we go to the movies with our buddy or anything like that," Jessica said.

"We're also always raising money for our formal dance in the spring," Trevor added. "We decorate the whole cafeteria for it."

Many of these activities they are helping to plan for Best Buddies locally are ideas that Trevor and Jessica learned about this summer at the Best Buddies Leadership Conference at Indiana University. The conference brought together students from all over the world, as well as some famous singers and actors with a variety of disabilities, including "Glee" actress Lauren Potter, who has Down syndrome.

"There would be workshops every day and we got a lot of activities to take back with us," Trevor said. "We got to talk to people from literally all over the world."

Contributions from both Rocky Hill High School and its Best Buddies chapter enabled them to attend the four-day conference, which had them staying in dormitories.

In addition to their work with Best Buddies, Jessica and Trevor are also active with Unified Sports, which puts disabled students and typical peers together on sports teams throughout the year. They are also volunteers with Challenger baseball.

Sports has always been a big part of both their lives. Jessica has competed on the school's cross-country and track teams since her freshman year. She also is a pitcher on the softball team, a sport she has always loved.

"I've been playing since tee ball," she said.

Trevor is also an athlete, the catcher for the RHHS baseball team for all four years as a student.

"I've played my whole life, pretty much," he said.

Both students serve on the Student Council, planning activities and fundraisers.

Along with all of her other activities, Jessica is also an active member of the Spanish Club and a coach for a local Little League team. Trevor serves as a mentor at Stevens School, going twice per week to work one on one with younger students.

"Both students, in everything they do, just lead by example. They are strong academically, both are gifted athletes, they are involved in several school-related and community groups," Almeida said.

"But to me, what sets them apart is their relentless energy and passion in working and advocating for our special needs students."

Trevor and Jessica hope to pursue careers where they can continue to help people. He plans to attend Southern Connecticut State University next fall to become a special education teacher. Jessica does not know which college she will attend, but wherever she matriculates, she plans to study nursing.

Jessica and Trevor said that it is a combination of athletics and giving back that have shaped their time at Rocky Hill High School. They hope to continue with both of those aspects wherever the future may lead them.

"Family and sports are a major part of my life that have made me into who I am," Jessica said.

"Sports has pretty much brought everything together for me," Trevor added. **RHL**

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‘A weather geek’

Bruce DePrest loves talking about sun, clouds, rain, snow, wind …

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Bruce DePrest has been fascinated by the world around him since his earliest of years.

“My father was always interested in science. When I was a young kid, he bought me a telescope and we’d look at sky together,” said DePrest, a Wethersfield resident and chief meteorologist at WFSB-TV 3 in Rocky Hill.

“Even though meteorology isn’t related to astronomy, it got me interested in science at a young age. I was fascinated by what weather can do to us even though we can’t do anything about it. I thought it would be cool to be in a career that would help people plan.”

Born in Chicago, where he lived for five years, DePrest also lived in Salt Lake City as a child before

Courtesy photo

Bruce DePrest enjoys being outside, such as hiking at Acadia National Park.

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his father, who worked for Aetna Life & Casualty, was transferred to Connecticut.

"I had the opportunity to see weather in the Midwest, the mountain climates, before we came to the East Coast," he said.

After graduating with honors from Lowell University in Massachusetts with a bachelor of science degree in meteorology, he found that securing a position was a new challenge.

"When I got out of school, I did not get a job in weather right away. There are a very limited number of meteorologists in any given market. I lucked out that Charlie Bagley hired me in 1978. I believe I was the first guy in a decade hired at the Travelers Weather Service," DePrest said.

"They called him Fair Weather Charlie and he gave me my start in the business. I lived in Windsor at that time, like Charlie did. He tried me out along with one of my college classmates to see if I'd be a good fit for a full-time employee."

His start date was Jan. 1, 1979, one of many dates that DePrest can easily recall off the top of his head.

He started doing operational forecasting for the Travelers Weather Service, which included reports for WTIC-AM and WTIC-FM, as well as for other media outlets. He has fond memories of working with the late morning personality Bob Steele of WTIC-AM.

"Of course, Bob Steele lived right down the street here, God rest his soul. Bob Steele was a stickler for words. If I mispronounced something, he would correct me," DePrest said.

"I always lived in somewhat of a fear of mispronouncing words. It was good he held broadcasters to a very high standard."

One of his responsibilities was a longer weather presentation.

"I think when I look back on one of the things I loved with those five-minute broadcasts with Bob Steele is you have to be very descriptive with your voice. You had to create pictures in people's heads without graphics," he said.

"What I love most with my career is taking the science of the weather and then we communicate it."

–Bruce DePrest

In addition to Bagley, he worked with other meteorologists such as Ken Garee, Jim MacDonald and John Erikson.

"I had the opportunity to work with some very brilliant meteorologists," DePrest said.

"These were all the guys who brought me in and trained me as a meteorologist on the radio and just becoming an operational forecaster. They had a wealth of experience. To this day, I just cherish those years as some of my best years in weather."

One of his responsibilities included forecasting for Channel 3. He remembers being a little star struck.

"Oh my God, I'm briefing Hilton Kaderli on the weather. I would brief him on the weather … then he'd walk back to Channel 3 and do the weather presentation," said DePrest, who also split the weekend weather duties with Garee.

"I would love to see the blooper reel," he said of his early days on air.

"I basically did weekends for 14

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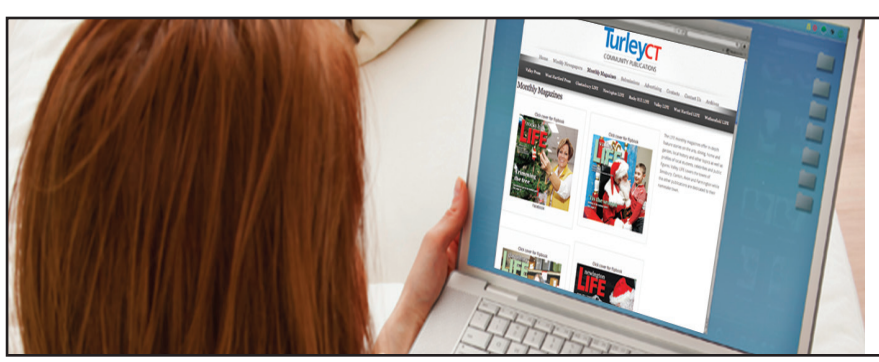

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Courtesy photo

Chief Meteorologist Bruce DePrest, right, goes over the weather with Mark Dixon in the WFSB studio in Rocky Hill.

years, as well as [serving as] Hilton's right-hand man for nearly 20 years. Hilton was not a meteorologist. He was kind of like the Channel 3 forecaster," DePrest said.

He also worked for a while with Joe Furey, now the chief meteorologist with Fox CT News. They became close friends and Furey was the best man at DePrest's wedding in 2012.

"Hilton retired in 1998 and Channel 3 had to make a decision – do we make Bruce chief meteorologist?" DePrest said.

The station brought in Miles Muzio from California to be the primary meteorologist and DePrest switched to mornings. He said it was difficult getting up at 2:30 each morning to commute from Hebron.

One of the challenges was getting out the door quietly.

"My sons raised dozens and dozens of chickens. I'd be walking out the door at 3:30 in the morning hoping not to wake the rooster," said DePrest, imitating a rooster. "I thought, 'Oh my God, the neighbors are going to kill me.'"

After four years, Muzio went back to Bakersfield, Calif., and Channel 3 promoted DePrest.

"Sept. 17, 2002, was my debut as chief meteorologist. It's the same day as my parents' anniversary," he said.

Now he works the weeknight news at 5, 6 and 11 p.m. It's not necessarily the cushy job that some people think.

"I usually go in by 2 o'clock in the afternoon, much earlier on days of severe weather. I think people think we do our graphics, do our forecasts, powder our noses, and there we go. Nothing could be further from the truth," he said.

"It's a very, very busy shift. Throw in a severe thunderstorm or a tornado and we have to put everything aside to keep our viewers safe. I'll sometimes stay overnight if there's a bad snowstorm to make sure there's a person onsite to do the weather. It's a lot of responsibility," he added.

"The weather often drives a newscast. We've been the number-one station ever since I've been there and even before. I'm blessed to be there; it's been a real rush. At the same time, it can be extremely stressful. It can be taxing on your body. I work 12, 14, 16 hours sometimes."

He said that after a big weather event, he usually feels fine for a while and then it catches up to him

"It takes a toll on the body.

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Bruce DePrest is chief meteorologist at WFSB-TV 3, where he's worked since 1984.

Usually I'm OK for a day or two after, then it's the third or fourth day" that he feels it, he said.

DePrest's duties include updating the web, writing a blog called the technical discussion, as well as Facebook and Twitter updates. He is responsible for his on-air look.

"I do my own make up, which is something I only do at work and not at home," he joked.

Wife Cheryl picks out his clothes, which she confessed is the limit of her interest in meteorology.

"I almost glaze over when he talks [about it]," she said with a laugh. "I pick his outfits. I have no interest in the weather except for how it's going to affect my day."

The two are into organic gardening, outdoor activities such as hiking, and cooking, including Cheryl's specialty of eggplant parmesan. They recently held a party to celebrate the 100th birthday of their Wethersfield home. They're planning a foodie trip to Tuscany next fall.

"He is the salt of the earth, one of nicest if not the nicest, I've ever met; just genuine, caring. He worries about you before he worries about anyone else. He's a fantastic meteorologist. He's a teacher. He can explain things to you and it makes sense," said Furey, chief meteorologist for FOX CT TV and CBS Radio Hartford.

"I had the privilege of working with him for six or seven years. Just being around him and learning his skills about meteorology was a big plus for me. He's just a special guy."

The pair worked together at Channel 3 in the 1990s. Furey said that he enjoys DePrest's sense of humor.

"You can have a conversation with Bruce, whether it's about the weather or anything, and he can take something that you said and he will be able to come out with some funny saying out of it. It's a talent. You have to observe it, the way he's able to take different words," Furey said.

"There will be a slight pause and he'll come out with it. He has a great dry sense of humor. I love to hear what comes out of him terms of something funny," he added.

"He's a fantastic, loyal guy; a reliable, solid, steady force,

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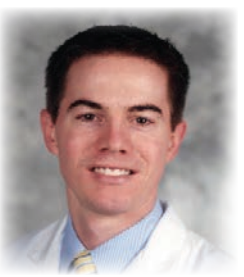
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whether he's doing the weather or being a friend."

Furey said that comes across in DePrest's forecasts.

"I think that's what Connecticut understands in relying on him for weather," he said. "He has a great understanding of computer models, he has a great understanding of weather patterns. He has the ability to take certain weather patterns and extract what might happen here."

Despite their friendship, the two don't consult with one another on forecasts.

"There might still be people out there who don't realize what we do is all self-contained. What you see on Channel 3 is our graphics, is our presentations; it's all us. [People ask], 'Do you consult with Brad Field on Channel 30? Do you consult with Joe Furey on Fox 61?' No, it's all us," DePrest said.

"I keep myself in a forecasting bubble. I don't have the luxury of seeing what other people are saying. I have to trust myself. I have to isolate myself in this bubble and trust myself," he added.

"There's also a huge misperception [that we just] read what the computer guidance has to tell us. The forecast models are guidance, they're not the Bible. I look at them critically. It's part of my job to be a doubting Thomas. I'll say, 'What's right with them? What's wrong with them?' Computer guidance is from very sophisticated computers from NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration].

"A lot of things are still left up to individual interpretation. We all come up with different interpretations. I like to think of it as students reading the same book. I think people think we just run with the models."

DePrest said he's not alarmist.

"I don't like to panic people. People know me as the voice of reason. I explain things in a calm way. If I'm urgent, if they hear urgency in my voice, they know the weather situation is very serious," he said.

He has seen a lot of changes in his almost four decades in the business.

"We tell people in an understandable way how the weather is going to affect their life. I could come out and say I'm a weather geek. I'm proud to say I am."

–Bruce DePrest

"Technology has really changed the way we do the weather. There were hardly PCs [when I started]. We were still using typewriters. There were hardly fax [machines]. We had to hang up wet faxes," he recalled.

"Things have changed so much as far as technology goes. [With] Doppler radar [and more] sophisticated models, I think we're a lot better at short-term forecasting and long-term forecasting. It's so different, so different, from 37 years ago. It's like night and day."

Certain weather events have stayed with him through the years, including ones that happened before he started his career, such as the Blizzard of 1978 and an ice storm in 1973.

"Probably the biggest one for me was Hurricane Gloria, Sept. 27, 1985. That was the week my first son was born. I believe he was born on a Monday at Mount Sinai Hospital and Gloria was moving up the coast," DePrest said.

While he didn't get the call to bring his family home at the height of the storm, the new parents still had to adjust during the aftermath.

"I was going around trees and power lines. We had no power. We had to use a flashlight to change diapers at night. It was not the most pleasant way to break into parenthood, let's put it that way," he said.

He's worked with a number of well-known personalities including Gayle King, Pat Sheehan and Bill O'Reilly.

"The number of people I've seen come and go is amazing," he said. "Eric Fisher, who's the chief meteorologist at WBZ [in Boston], he was my intern a long time ago. I'm so proud of him."

DePrest is also quick to praise the other meteorologists on staff at WFSB.

"We have a great team right now," he said. "We've got a great staff that makes us the number-one team that really relates to people. We have the best technology."

People don't hesitate to let him know when he's wrong about a forecast.

"Most of the time people are very nice about it. They'll say, 'Bruce, that didn't quite work out like you thought it would.' If I was wrong, I'll explain why and they'll get it. There are times I was right, and they might confuse me with someone else," he said, chuckling.

He has his preferences when it comes to the weather.

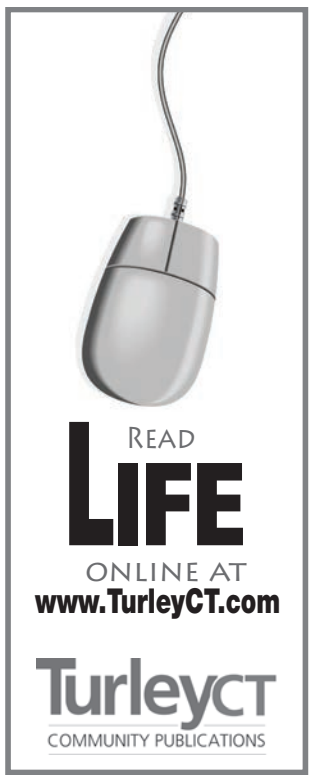
"I'm not a big fan of summer thunderstorms. One might say I have a little bit of anxiety. Cheryl says if I wake up in the morning and know there's something bad in afternoon, I get a knot in my stomach," he said.

"I absolutely love the challenge of winter storm forecasting. That's my real strength. I love the challenge of forecasting snow totals, who's going to get the snow, who's going to get the ice, who's going to get the rain."

He still gets excited about the weather.

"What I love most with my career is taking the science of the weather and then we communicate it. My job is a beautiful blend of science and communication," he said.

"We tell people in an understandable way how the weather is going to affect their life. I could come out and say I'm a weather geek. I'm proud to say I am." **RHL**



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A comforting guide

Daniel Warriner serves others through his hospice work

by Mark Jahne
Editor

People nearing the end of their lives have a wide variety of medical needs, but there are spiritual and emotional needs, too, for both them and their families. That's where the Rev. Daniel Warriner comes in.

Warriner, 34, grew up in Wethersfield – where his father is a retired police officer – and now calls Rocky Hill home. He is employed as the spiritual care coordinator with Masonicare Partners Home Health & Hospice.

"My father was a strong fatherly influence on me," the soft-spoken clergyman said.

He graduated from Wethersfield High School, where he played football and other sports, then earned a major in physics and a minor in astronomy from Central Connecticut State University. Along the way, he said he began to think about the greater implications of "what" and "why" in his life.

"About halfway through college, I became a Christian," Warriner said.

That was part of his journey of wrestling for the greater meaning in life. He attended services at the First Church of Christ in Wethersfield then; he now worships at the Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church.

"I got married right before I went to seminary," he added.

He attended the Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, a nondenominational school near Boston. During that time, his grandfather became seriously ill and Warriner went to see him. He held the elderly man's hand and offered him his love.

"In those moments, my faith felt very real," he said.

"I see myself as a companion for their journey."
–Rev. Daniel Warriner

He led his college ministry program while at CCSU, which led to an interest in chaplaincy. He later took special training for that. He was ordained within the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference Feb. 9, 2014.

Warriner then joined Masonicare, where his original goal was to become a hospital chaplain.

"Even early on in my chaplaincy I focused on elder care," he said.

His frustration is that, while hospice is designed to serve as a multiple-month program to prepare the patient and family medically, spiritually, emotionally and otherwise for the pending death, most patients enter the program with only a few days or weeks left in their lives.

"The average length of stay in hospice in Connecticut is two weeks, the worst in the United States," Warriner said.

Masonicare partners with St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Hartford and he works one day each week at the hospital.

"We work with the palliative care staff at the hospital. We go wherever people are. We're very home-care oriented," he said. "I'm passionate about ministry."

Palliative care by definition is medical care that relieves pain, symptoms and stress caused by a serious illness.

Warriner and the Masonicare team minister to people of all faiths and also those with no faith. He does not promote his personal denomination to any of his patients. He said his patients often want to talk about religion, dreams, family and more.

The family piece is important because he must help them to deal with the eventual loss of a loved one. Bereavement counseling is part of the program.

"A family is like a mobile in a child's room, and a terminal illness diagnosis changes that. Somebody's not going to be there anymore," he said. "Dealing with people who are dying has a way of making you think of how you will die."

In addition to Warriner, the Masonicare team consists of a nurse, social worker, massage and Reiki therapists, a dietician and a music therapist. They work together as an interdisciplinary group.

Warriner said when he first meets a patient, he asks if that person wants his care. If the answer is no, he respects that and moves on. He doesn't force himself into the situation.

"Can I come by and see you? Would you like a visit?" is how he approaches each person.

In order to qualify for hospice care, a patient must have a terminal diagnosis and be

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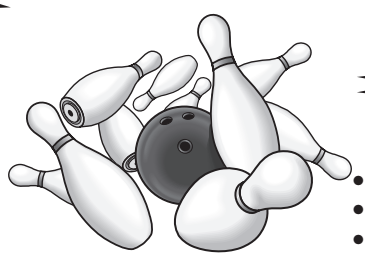

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expected to die within the next six months. He or she receives palliative care throughout that final journey.

"How can we give them quality for the time they have left?" Warriner asked. "How can we give somebody the most amount of comfort and quality in the days they have remaining? I see myself as a companion for their journey."

The answer to those questions can involve prayer. Music may be the answer, or it may be something as simple as holding the person's hand.

"The beauty of spiritual care is that I try to care for the whole person. There are beautiful healings that take place," he said. "This journey is not one I ever expected. God drew me here in a very natural and organic way."

Warriner said he has been told that he is a calming presence, and this pleases him. He wants to be present for his patients and help provide whatever they need. He enjoys every aspect of his job.

"We're a nonprofit hospice. A majority of our funding comes from the government," he said.

Colleague Marie Roman spoke favorably about Warriner and his work. She is the counseling and social work supervisor for Masonicare Partners Home Health & Hospice.

"The patients and the families all feel that he is amenable to where they are at," she said. "He's really able to identify what the patient and the family needs."

She has never received a complaint about his work and said that stands out as unusual. Roman praised him for helping to bring an ethics component to the agency.

"He brings new energy to us ... a breath of fresh air," she added. **RHL**

The Rev. Daniel Warriner is spiritual care coordinator with Masonicare Partners Home Health & Hospice.

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Plenty of school spirit

West Hill School held its annual Spirit Night celebration the evening of Oct. 22. There was plenty of fun for everyone, including ring toss and basketball shot contests in the gymnasium and table-top games in the hallways. More than 70 sponsors provided raffle prizes and the PTO organized and staffed the event.

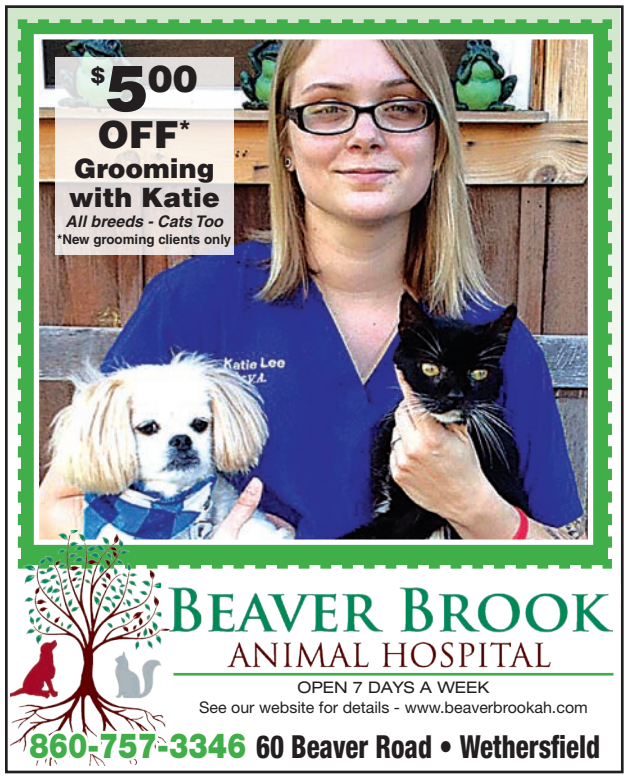
Children lined up to test their skills at shooting a basketball.

Among the prizes were golf for four at Wethersfield Country Club, a Samsung Gallery tablet donated by the Rocky Hill Education Foundation and a 40-inch television courtesy of the J.H. Scelza Co.

David Margolin of Mr. M's Magic made balloon animals.

Photos by Mark Jahne

Jennifer Baldwin, left, and Heather Collins sold all kinds of West Hill gear including shirts, sweatpants, caps, pencils, water bottles and more.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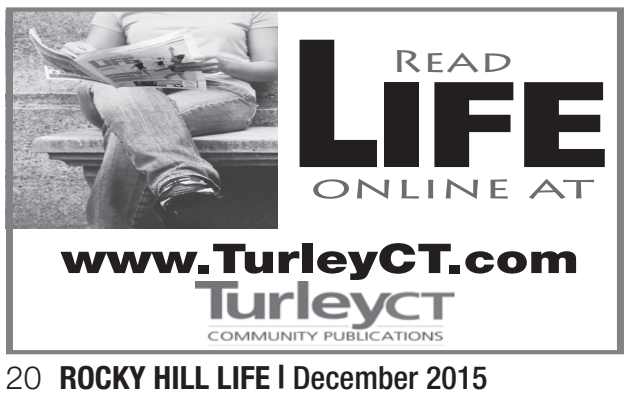

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HOLIDAY SPIRIT

Colors of the season

Several theories exist as to why red and green became the hallmarks of Christmas. One such theory is that the colors evolved from pagan celebrations similar to the evolution of Christmas traditions. Prior to the arrival of Christianity, many cultures viewed the color green as the symbol of life . It is believed that, during harsh winters, evergreen trees were cut down and brought indoors to symbolize that life still exists and thrives despite the cold and darkness of winter.

Other pagan holidays featured the use of green, red and gold, including the festival of Yule.

As Christianity spread across Europe and eventually other parts of the world, red and green were linked to Jesus Christ. Green still represented life, but now this was the eternal life offered by Christ.

Red was said to symbolize sacrifice, namely the blood of Jesus.

Some theorize that the red of the holiday season represents the apples on the tree of paradise in the Garden of Eden. Gold, also frequently used in holiday decorations, can represent the sun and light, both important ways to ward off the dark winter. Gold was also one of the gifts brought to baby Jesus. **RHL**

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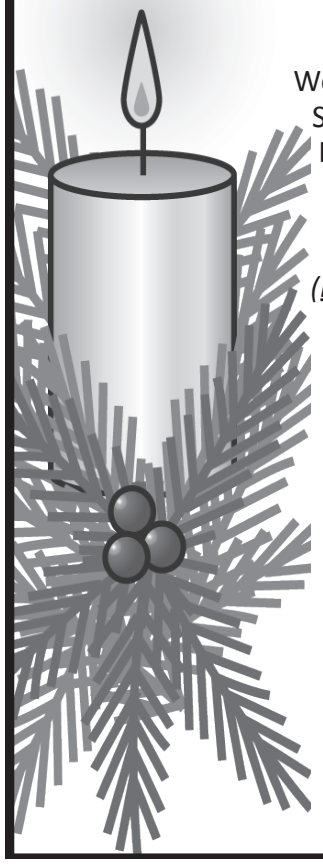

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Monday, December 21st, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

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Thursday, December 24th
Vigil Mass – 4:00 PM (Youth Group Choir)
Family Mass – 5:30 PM (Children's Choir)
Carol Service – 11:30 PM (Adult Choir)
Midnight Mass – 12:00 Midnight

Friday, December 25th
9:30 AM & 11:30 AM

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‘To make them feel good, at least for one day’

Volunteers make holiday meals special

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

For those who volunteer serving up holiday meals, their efforts are about much more than putting food on the table.

For most people, spending the holidays with family or friends is a given. Thanks to volunteers, even those undergoing challenging times have the opportunity to enjoy a special meal on Christmas and Thanksgiving.

Each year, Hands On Hartford offers a Thanksgiving meal at Christ Church Cathedral and a Christmas meal at South Congregational Church, both in Hartford.

One of the first people a guest sees at the meals is longtime volunteer Phil Knecht of Wethersfield.

“I’m like a maître d’ in a restaurant. I try to make them feel welcome,” said Knecht, who turned 87 in November and volunteers for Hands On Hartford year-round. “It’s [about] meeting people that need help and giving them a day to enjoy. I particularly feel very sad when I see children coming to the [Thanksgiving] breakfast.”

Many of the Hands On Hartford volunteers have been participating for years, such as Don Goodman of Canton, who’s been volunteering for about 20 years.

“I’d heard about the Thanksgiving meal and decided to show up and see if I can help. I didn’t know what to bring. I’d never been to a soup kitchen. I brought a whipped cream pie. I wasn’t thinking to put it in slices, to put it on plates. It was exactly the wrong type of pie to buy. I started learning a lot from my first trip,” said Goodman, who has served on nonprofit boards.

Since then, he has been a sponsor for the Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter meals that Hands On Hartford organizes and hosts for homeless and low-income working individuals and families.

Each year, Goodman said he’s tried to find ways to make the meal better.

“One year, a friend of mine gave me some salads. I thought, ‘My God, they’ve never had salad.’ For the past 15 years, they’ve had salads. I like iced tea, but I also like soda, so now we have an entire soda bar. Little by little, we’ve added different things. We’ve added candy; we started putting out bowls of fresh fruit,” he said.

Several years ago, they added packaged treats, such as Ring Dings and Twinkies, and now give away about 1,000 at the meal. They’ve also added bags of chips and popcorn for the guests to take home. Last year, 278 guests enjoyed the Christmas Day meal, each leaving with a gift bag.

Goodman and his family coordinate with Chef Kim Bunton to provide side dishes and extras, and also bring volunteers to the events. He credits his wife, Annie Kelleher, for her assistance with the preparation.

“We prepare veggies for 250 people. Annie has helped me do the shopping. She helps me do the prep. She gets up at 2 in the morning to help me prep the vegetables. She came up with one of the favorites, candied yams with cherries. I couldn’t have done it without her help and her support. It doesn’t happen without her contribution,” said Goodman, who also brought his

children to volunteer at the meals, starting when they were young. They're now adults and have been volunteering for 19 years in a row.

"I have been very thankful to have my kids participate. I have always believed in trying to make the world a better place, in loving our brothers and our sisters.
I am endlessly grateful for the opportunity I had to participate.
I think I've had much more than I've given over the years," said Goodman, who is a financial advisor with Wells Fargo and splits his time between Connecticut and Hawaii.

"I grew up in the ghetto of Brooklyn. My mom was a single mom. We lived in a tenement; there were rats, roaches and we never had enough food. I was always very influenced by my upbringing. This is a way of giving thanks for the good fortune that's come to me."

Goodman said he's been surprised by how big the crowds have gotten through the years.

One thing that hasn't changed, though, is the kindness that people show one another.

"Over 60 to 70 major holidays, I've never seen any people get into arguments. I've never seen any sort of dispute. I've never seen any sort of conflict during any of our holiday meals. People genuinely try to be nice to the people next to them. It's a warm family environment where everyone tries to care for other people," he said.

"Over 60 to 70 major holidays, I've never seen any people get into arguments. I've never seen any sort of dispute. I've never seen any sort of conflict during any of our holiday meals. People genuinely try to be nice to the people next to them."

– Don Goodman

"Every year, we try to make the holiday better than the one before."

Knecht has a simple goal for everyone he meets at the meals: "To make them feel good, at least for one day," Knecht said. "It gives them hope that tomorrow will be a better day."

For more information visit handsonhartford.org or email info@handsonhartford.org. **RHL**

Hands On Hartford is a human services agency focused on support to the Hartford community in the areas of food, housing and economic security, while providing meaningful volunteer opportunities. It operates a soup kitchen, a food pantry, provides weekend meals for children and seniors, and provides housing support through a supportive housing program and homelessness prevention assistance. It also organizes community service projects at its own programs and across the city of Hartford. Last year, it involved 3,300 volunteers in performing more than 30,000 hours of service.

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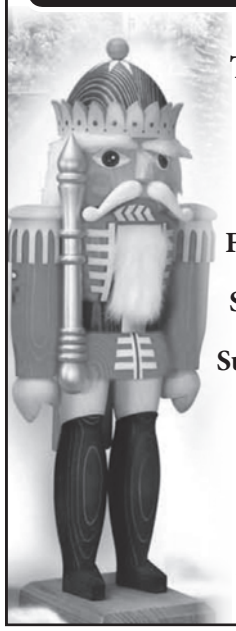

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"Merry Old Santa" is one of the illustrations by Thomas Nast, the man whose published art first popularized Christmas in America.

Merry and bright

Party and museum tours celebrate centuries of Christmas in America

by Mark Jahne
Editor

The Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum in Wethersfield is offering people an opportunity to get into the holiday spirit while at the same time showcasing Christmas decorating and customs from the colonial days.

It also seeks to educate people about how Christmas as we know it today evolved from a time when it was a comparatively low-key event.

With that in mind, the museum's three historic houses will be closed for the first 10 days of December in order to get them ready for the WDS Holiday Preview Party scheduled from 5-8 p.m. Dec. 11. Guests will be treated to a candlelight preview of the holiday decorations throughout the museum and stroll from house to house while enjoying food, wine, ale and live holiday music.

There will also be the opportunity to chat with Mr. and Mrs. Silas Deane, Mrs. Claus and guides in period dress. Admission is $25 at the door.

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Holiday LIFE

Wreaths and roping decorate the outside of the museum.

This portion of the exhibit traces the origins of Santa Claus.

"Three Centuries of Christmas" evening candlelight tours of the three houses – featuring guides in period dress sharing the history of Christmas and New Year's Day – take place from 5 to 8 p.m. Dec. 18 and 19. Daylight "Three Centuries of Christmas" tours will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays and 1 to 4 p.m. Sundays from Dec. 12 to Jan. 3.

Admission is $12 for adults, $10 for senior citizens, $6 for students/children, or $28 per family (two adults, two children).

"Three Centuries of Christmas" begins in the Silas Deane House, circa 1770, where New Year's Day was the main holiday, not Christmas, due to the puritanical customs that lingered in New England.

The house reflects the preparations for the family's "New Years' Day Calling," when prominent gentlemen would call on the lady of the household.

It was also the day when individuals who owed the family money would meet privately with the master of the

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wine baskets

Holiday LIFE

Famed illustrator Thomas Nast (above, right) created the above work of Santa and his reindeer.

house to settle their debts or make a New Year's resolution to provide goods or services to settle their accounts in the coming year.

The Isaac Stevens House is decorated to depict the holiday celebrations of a middle-class household during the early to mid-1800s, when many of the Christmas traditions known today were adopted in New England. The "best" parlor features a table-top tree decorated with candles, gilded eggshells and edible treats, in keeping with the era.

The Stevens House includes a special exhibit with enlarged color illustrations by Thomas Nast from the museum's rare 1888 copy of Clement Moore's "An Account of a Visit of St. Nicholas." The colorful images tell the tale of how the secular aspect of Christmas was created in the early 19th century, which coincides with the museum's interpretation of Christmas at the Stevens House.

At the Joseph Webb House, guests will see decorations typical of the early 20th century, a period of stunning decoration and celebration.

The home is prepared for a Christmas open house that was typical of the times, including a dessert buffet set up in the dining parlor.

The culmination of several weeks' work, the lavishness of the dessert and decorations could make or break the reputation of the hostess. Decorations include three Christmas trees, evergreen roping, fresh greens, fruit and a collection of period ornaments.

Also featured are a collection of antique iron toys from the late 19th and early 20th centuries and a Victorian doll house.

"We did Christmas last year, but we gave the party a rest for one year," said WDS Executive Director Charles Lyle. "People missed the party. It's a lot of fun."

He likes the idea of the museum focusing on the history of the holidays.

"Seven or eight years ago we started decorating for the holidays in a big way and an intelligent way. The three homes are all interpreted differently. Christmas as we know it today really didn't happen until the late 19th century," Lyle said.

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The exhibits at the Stevens House are designed to teach visitors about what he called the start of the commercialization of Christmas. The Thomas Nast illustrations were the first widely published drawings that publicized the holiday.

"We transformed one of the rooms on the second floor into an exhibit gallery," he said.

Lyle said Nash also created the image of Santa's workshop at the North Pole.

"It's been fun. We tried to take both Thanksgiving and Christmas and have special activities to bring people into the museum. I don't know anyone else who has done an exhibit on celebrating the origins of Santa Claus," he added.

Period music and carols will be sung outside the houses. Admission to the tour is $30 per person. **RHL**

The Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum is located at 211 Main St. For more information visit webb-deane-stevensmuseum.org or call 860-529-0612.

Above: Mrs. Claus will be on hand to greet guests during the Dec. 11 holiday preview party. Right: Those who take the Christmas candlelight tour will see these Colonial style tree ornaments.

The Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum Shop
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Holiday LIFE

Thanksgiving made easy

Experts offer advice on how to have a stress-free holiday

by Alison Jalbert and Nancy Thompson
LIFE Staff

Thanksgiving sounds like a simple holiday – gather with loved ones to share a meal and express what everyone is thankful for.

Unless you live in a Norman Rockwell painting, it's not always that easy. Whether it's finding dishes to feed vegetarians, figuring out what to buy versus cook, or dealing with frustrating family members, the holiday often comes with stressors, making the day of thanks seem more like a day of terror.

Area experts offer tips on how to make Thanksgiving as enjoyable and relaxing as it should – and could – be.

Satisfying vegetarian eaters

Thanksgiving is the holiday for which turkey is the star. But what if you have vegetarians at your table?

Les Harris, a chef and the owner of EZSTREATS, a gourmet food truck and catering service, offered a few suggestions for vegetarian dishes that everyone will enjoy.

For an appetizer, Harris suggested a cold burrata purée with a basil/tomato confite finished with a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil and saba.

Sounds good, but what is burrata? And what is saba?

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Holiday LIFE

word means butter, a reflection of its milky, buttery flavor. It's available at specialty cheese shops and gourmet markets.

Saba is an ancient condiment that's getting renewed interest among chefs and gourmets. The thick syrup is the main ingredient in traditional balsamic vinegar, but it's less expensive because it isn't aged.

Harris also suggested three dishes as an entrée – acorn squash stuffed with onions, walnuts, sunflower seeds, celery, raisins and cheddar or goat cheese; grilled asparagus with garlic and panko breadcrumbs; and roasted Brussels sprouts.

The Brussels sprouts are seared and browned in a combination of extra virgin olive oil, salt, pepper, diced onion, crushed garlic and butter, then mixed with walnuts, vegetable stock and cranberries.

Make it or buy it?

Louise Albin, owner of Café Louise Catering in West Hartford, believes that, since Thanksgiving is a celebration of food and giving thanks, everything should be prepared from scratch.

She understands that people can be too busy to do that, however, and encourages people to take advantage of caterers or grocery stores that offer Thanksgiving menus.

"We do everything from brining the turkeys," she said. "One of our bestsellers is gravy. Some people don't like making gravy, or they feel insecure about it."

Many people think stuffing is difficult to make, and Albin said that makes them gravitate toward Stove Top stuffing.

Making stuffing is "actually quite simple," yet it's another popular item at Café Louise.

For things such as hors d'oeuvres or breads, she encourages people to buy those.

There's also a certain can-shaped dish many people prefer over a homemade option.

"One thing I have found both personally as well as over the years is my husband would much rather have jellied cranberry sauce out of the can versus a cranberry chutney that we make from scratch," she said.

People can make mashed potatoes at home, as well as sweet potatoes, whether it's something as simple as baking them with interesting butter or mashing them.

"You can start doing things days in advance, and it's fine. Sweet potato casserole, turnip casserole and mashed potatoes can be made a few days in advance and warmed up in the oven," Albin said.

"People have it in their heads that they have to be doing everything last minute with pots and pans piled high to the sky."

Creative leftovers

Then there's the question of what to do with all those leftovers, vegetarian or otherwise.

Harris suggested using mashed potatoes for potato pancakes or as the topping for shepherd's pie.

The turkey carcass can be simmered for stock to be used in soup and other dishes, and leftover turkey meat can be used in sandwiches and tetrazzini and ground for burgers, meatballs or meatloaf.

Albin said if the turkey is organic, making a bone broth out of its carcass is "really healthy." Leftover turkey can also be used in pot pie and turkey Bolognese.

She said many side dishes, like potatoes, can be frozen, which saves people from feeling like they need to eat the same foods in different combinations for the next few days.

"If I had a really big turkey, I'll freeze some of the turkey meat and use it in stews or soups," Albin explained. "In the wintertime, I love doing turkey soup and freezing it by the quart."

If people are still feeling stymied by what to do with leftovers, she encourages them to turn to the Internet.

"Nowadays, it's so easy for people to Google 'turkey leftovers' and get a recipe or recipe ideas," she said.

Staying sane with frustrating family members

Frustrating family members often are a major cause of stress at Thanksgiving and throughout the holiday season, when it's easy for a casual comment or action to escalate into a spirit-dampening situation.

Donna Morrison, a licensed clinical social worker with offices in Wethersfield and West Hartford, said knowing how to communicate effectively can help deal with frustrating family members and other guests.

Morrison suggested focusing on clear, calm communication, and doing it before frustration and stress can build. She likes what she calls "I statements" to express frustrations. For example, instead of saying, "You never help me with anything around here," it's better to say, "I feel upset that I don't get any help with the dishes (or the laundry or whatever). Could you help me with it?"

She said another effective "I statement" would be, "I am feeling overwhelmed with all that I have to do. Could each family member make a dish to bring to the holiday dinner?" Phrasing it that way would work better and be more likely to solve a budding problem than saying, "No one ever helps me, so I am not hosting this year."

Some holiday stress comes from overdoing. Morrison suggested setting calm limits by saying "I can help you with __ on __" instead of volunteering to do more than is realistic. **RHL**

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Holiday LIFE

Flaming punch and church at 4 a.m.

Christmas traditions from the old country remain a part of locals lives

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Erwin and Helga Schramma were a young married couple in the years following World War II. They could not return to their homes because that part of Germany was added to Poland.

They also didn't want to live under Communist rule, so they moved to Dusseldorf, West Germany, filing an application with a refugee resettlement program run by the National Council of Churches to immigrate to America.

Their application was approved in 1956 and, with a 5-week-old baby girl in tow, they set off for the New World. They left behind family and friends, but one thing they brought with them was their holiday traditions.

"Both of my parents grew up in East Prussia. They both had large farmsteads," said Petra Jenkinson, their daughter, who was the little baby at that time. The Schrammas spoke no English. All they knew was that they had to take a train to Hartford where representatives of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew would greet them and take them to an apartment in Farmington, the town where they still live.

Erwin, who recently turned 93, recalled how the area was already decorated for the holidays. Over time, they learned English as well as U.S. history, and qualified to become U.S. citizens.

Helga joined the Hartford Saengerbund, a German-American singing society, in 1969. Erwin followed some time later, and now they sing with their daughter in its chorus.

Christmas trees, or weihnachtsbaum, are also part of German tradition. They are decorated with glass ornaments and "lametta," which means tinsel. The popular Christmas song "O Tannenbaum" is a German tune about a Christmas tree.

They said trees used in German homes are of a different type than those in New England,

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Courtesy photo

The Monasterial family of Wethersfield consists of, from left, Alberto, Amy, and their children Abby and Amiel. They share some of the Christmas traditions of their native Philippines.

with larger and thicker branches. Traditionalists use candles attached to those branches with large clips. They are not lit for fire safety reasons.

The Schrammas said they always buy a real tree. All of the lights on it are white. Another common tradition is the weihnactspyramid, candles on a rotating wheel that makes dinging sounds when the candles are lit.

One of the more unique practices is to hide a pickle amid all the tinsel and ornaments on the tree. Anyone who finds it receives a small gift. Jenkinson maintains this tradition with her husband and children.

"We listen to a lot of old, traditional Christmas songs. We have a very strong music tradition in this family," she said.

Jenkinson plays mandolin and zither. Helga said when her children were little, they had to either recite a poem or sing a song for the holidays.

Ornaments are sometimes edible as well as decorative, such as chocolates that hang from the branches by string. Sparklers are also hung on the tree, then removed for the children to light and enjoy outdoors.

Advent calendars, called Adventskalendar, are another tradition that is familiar to Americans. German versions are either flat with little images inside each tab or designed a bit deeper so that when one opens the tab for that day, a small chocolate treat is inside.

The bunten teller is a special colored plate on which cookies, nuts, candies, oranges and apples are displayed. These are often given to children. Advent wreaths grace the table, and lights are placed in the windows.

"I still decorate my house for Advent," Helga said. "That's when I change my house [for the holidays]."

St. Nicholas Day is celebrated Dec. 6. Children put out clean shoes in hopes they will be filled with candy, nuts and fruit if they were good. In the tradition of many European countries, the Christmas season does not end until Jan. 6 – Three Kings Day.

The Schrammas always attend the 4 p.m. Christmas Eve service at St. James Church in Farmington, followed by Heiliger Abend, Christmas Eve dinner. In German tradition, Santa Claus does not come down the chimney. St. Nicholas knocks on the door and the children get to see him and receive their gifts.

Food is a key ingredient of many Christmas traditions, and Germany is no different. Helga said the traditional meal she recalled from back home was a stuffed goose. Blutwurst, or blood sausage, is also seasonal fare.

Now, duck and smoked turkey may be the main course. Potatoes are a typical side dish.

"The food is served from the first day of Advent on," Jenkinson said.

Glühwein, served only for winter holidays, is heated red wine that is flavored with such things as cloves, anise, citrus, cinnamon sticks and sugar. Some people add a shot of liquor to the mix.

Guests may be treated to Bärenfang, a honey-flavored liquor, or feuerzangenbowle, "burnt punch."

The latter is a beverage in which sugar loaf or a solid cone of sugar is soaked with rum and placed on a bridge above a bowl of hot red wine. The sugar is set afire and allowed to melt and drop into the wine, which is then served.

Baked specialties including rum balls, stollen (fruit cake) and spiced cookies called speculatius are typical holiday sweets. Marzipan treats are also popular.

Amy and Alberto Monasterial came to this country from the Philippines in 1998. They and their children, Abby and Amiel, are Roman Catholics and live in Wethersfield.

The couple grew up in the same town, General Tinio, located in the Nuevo Ecija province on the island of Luzon. "We were classmates from grade one through high school," Alberto said.

The opportunity for a computer job with Aetna drew them to the Hartford area. They already spoke English as well as the official Philippine language, Tagalog.

Those who think the American Christmas season starts too soon just make the Monasterials smile. It's a huge deal in their native land that can last four months or longer. The season kicks off in September and does not end until the aforementioned Three Kings Day in early January.

"In the Philippines, we [decorate] in September. We have the longest Christmas over there," Amy said with a smile.

"If you go to the mall in September, you cannot even move,"

Holiday LIFE

Alberto added.

September is also when Christmas carols start popping up on the radio, in both languages. American-style natural evergreen trees don't grow in that climate, so artificial trees are used instead. The most popular decorative item is the lantern. "Every house has a Christmas lantern that we actually make," Amy said.

They brought that tradition with them to the United States, but now the lanterns are store bought. Religious observance is another important aspect of the holiday in the Philippines.

She explained that Catholics attend church nine mornings in a row leading up to Christmas. These services are called the Mass of the Rooster because they are held at the same time the rooster begins to crow – 4 a.m.

"It's 4 a.m. for nine days. It's like a devotion," Amy said.

Everybody from the town or village attends, and if you don't arrive on time, the pews are full and you must stand outside and listen to the proceedings on speakers.

Alberto said it is a highlight of the year because one gets to see family, friends, neighbors and others who all return to town for this period of religious and cultural observance.

Most people take off the week leading up to Christmas as vacation time. Tradition states that attending all nine of these Masses will guarantee that one's wishes will be granted.

"It's really fun. All the townspeople are in the church. Vendors are outside making rice cakes," Alberto said.

Amy said not only do people go to these Masses, but they also wear their best attire. Clothing and shoes are common gifts that parents give their children. Her husband said he misses this tradition the most.

He added Christmas Eve is when families have their big holiday feast. This is served after attending church.

The typical meal is a ham dinner. Other favorite items are rice noodles, cheese balls, fruit salad and barbecue meat on a stick. Beer is the preferred adult beverage.

"We believe in Santa Claus, too," Amy said. "We hang our sacks close to the door because we don't have chimneys."

Historically, Santa was more likely to bring them money than toys or games. But these days he is just as likely to bring them gifts and gadgets, she said.

Children sing carols in school, and neighbors go from house to house offering the season's greetings. They also sing carols, which can be done as a fundraiser for charity.

"It's part of the tradition," Alberto said. "Christmas Day is the best."

Another part of the tradition is that children treat all senior citizens as grandparents. Amy said if someone comes calling at your house, you give him or her a small gift or something to eat, even if they are complete strangers.

Everyone is prepared to give gifts to their friends and neighbors as well as their relatives, she added.

"When you grow up, there are different stages and different experiences of the holidays," Amy said.

Although not usually served for Christmas, another popular meal served for various celebrations is spaghetti. It is served in a tomato sauce with ground pork or beef.

What makes this dish distinctly Filipino is that sliced hot dogs and sliced hard-boiled eggs are placed on top of the pasta. These are then flavored with catsup made from bananas, not tomatoes. **RHL**

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That's a wrap

Creative and frugal ways to dress up holiday gift presentation

Holiday shoppers spend billions of dollars each year on gifts for friends, family and coworkers. But holiday shoppers also spend substantial amounts of money dressing up those gifts with bows and wrapping paper.

Shoppers may not want to spend much more on wrapping paper, bags and other ways to dress-up their gifts, and by employing a few tricks of the gift wrapping trade, they may not have to. The following are some frugal, yet flashy, ways to wrap presents this holiday season.

Children's artwork: Over the course of a school year parents can accumulate dozens of original pieces of art from their children's time in the classroom. Instead of relegating those pictures to a memory box or temporary glory on the refrigerator, turn them into unique gift wrap. Pair these pieces of art with colored ribbon, and everyone who gets a unique masterpiece will feel special.

Newspaper: Recycle newsprint and comics into wrapping paper. Encourage everyone to wrap in newspaper for a cohesive look come Christmas morning.

Cloth: Leftover cloth from Halloween or cloth purchased to create homemade curtains can be turned into giftwrap for awkward-shaped gifts. Use decorative ribbon to seal the bundle shut.

Brown paper: Brown paper tied with twine or ribbon is inexpensive and can easily be recycled after use. Use a marker to put the names of gift recipients on each package to save on gift tags as well.

Glass jars: Use mason jars when wrapping smaller gifts, including gift cards, to give them an arts-and-crafts feel.

Fabric gift bags: If you're handy with a needle and thread, sew sacks out of leftover fabric to make gift bags of various sizes.

Cookie tins: Find unique cookie tins from yard sales or leftover tins from holidays past and use them as gift boxes.

Recipes: If you will be giving a cookbook or food-themed gifts, print recipes that can be used as gift wrap and then later used to make certain dishes.

Baby linens: From blankets to wash cloths, use baby linens to wrap infant-themed gifts for new parents.

Baskets: Wicker baskets are available in various shapes and sizes. They can be used to make a gift collection and then reused over and over again. RHL

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Photos by Allie Rivera

Get Fit. Have Fun.

Parks and Recreation offers exercise programs to stay healthy and happy

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Summer may be over, but opportunities to stay fit and healthy continue all year at the Rocky Hill Parks and Recreation Department.

"We're offering a variety of specific programs that anyone can try," Aquatics/Recreation Supervisor Livia Jacobs said.

Throughout the year, Parks and Recreation hosts classes for adults and senior citizens looking for interesting new ways to stay fit. For adults, the department offers classes in strength training, Pilates and Bar Physique.

"I think a lot of people who take these classes are not typically members of a gym," Jacobs said. "It's a much smaller, more social group."

Many of the classes are taught in the Parks and Recreation facility on Old Main Street, including strength training, which Jacobs takes during her lunch break.

"You're working on your core and you're strengthening every muscle in your body," she said. "I love going to that class."

It uses free weights, bands, weighted bars and other equipment that the department has on site to tone and strengthen the body.

"Some people come here and say, 'I can't believe how much equipment you have for not being a gym,'" Jacobs said. "We are very lucky to have this."

The strength training class is offered in the facility's dance room, where the Pilates and Bar Physique classes are also held.

Pilates, which has gained popularity in recent years, is an exercise program designed to develop a strong core while maintaining loose, limber limbs. For these classes, the department has partnered with Personal Euphoria, a Wethersfield-based business of Pilates instructors run by Maggie Downie.

"She is wonderful and it's nice working with her because if an instructor is sick or has to miss a class, she gets a replacement instructor for us," Jacobs said. "We have a few people in the building who take those classes during their lunch as well."

The Bar Physique class, which is also offered for adults, is another fairly new program to the area that is also taught by instructors from Personal Euphoria.

"It's a little like ballet," Jacobs said. "They're standing at the bar and toning their muscles from there."

Bar Physique is described as a workout that focuses on small, controlled movements. It is gentle on joints but defines and tones muscle through heart-pumping bursts of interval training.

The town Parks and Recreation Department has amassed a wide range of fitness equipment for its strength training, Pilates and other exercise classes.

Though it is only offered as an evening class, both strength training and Pilates are offered during the evening and during the day. Jacobs hopes more people who work locally may want to take advantage of these opportunities.

"We hope to get more people to come in on their lunch breaks," she said. "They're the type of classes that will give you that strengthening aspect, but you won't have to go home and shower after it."

For the older crowd, the department also offers specialty classes such as Zumba Gold, Senior Stretch and Boomer Bootcamp. Zumba, a dance-based exercise class that has instructors around the world, created Zumba Gold classes specifically for older adults.

"It's geared for the baby boomers and seniors," Elderly Service Coordinator Denise Sanderson said. "It's not as much jumping and pounding on the joints."

The classes, which are offered Friday mornings in the community center gymnasium, offer an aerobic exercise that feels more like dancing. According to Sanderson, this program is especially suited for those who don't enjoy typical exercise regimens.

"This is a great program because it incorporates dance movements and music," she said.

For those who want a bit more of an intense workout, Parks and Recreation offers Boomer Boot Camp. A relatively new program that began about two years ago, Sanderson said it is now beginning to gain popularity.

"Usually when we offer something new, it takes a full year cycle to catch on," she said.

The Boomer Boot Camp is geared for those age 50 and over who want a more challenging fitness routine.

"It's more strenuous," Administrative Assistant Brittany Sanderson said. "It's more of what you would see in a Jillian Michaels or Beach Body workout, so it's a harder program."

Senior citizens who wish to take a fitness class that has a slower pace have the option of the Senior Stretch program. This 45-minute workout includes a warm-up, spot toning of a certain body part each class, a low-impact aerobics set and then a cool down.

Seniors in town can also try T'ai Chi, a new program. This class that incorporates meditation into the movements is especially useful for those with limited mobility who want to pursue a healthy lifestyle.

"We get some seniors who are on oxygen, but they still want to exercise," Sanderson said. "This class helps with breathing, digestion and balance. People really do seem to like it."

She added that offering these programs is important for seniors, not only for the social aspect it can provide, but for the numerous health benefits that even a small amount of movement can bring.

"With a lot of these programs, doctors have found it keeps their cholesterol down low, it keeps their blood pressure in control. Some have even gotten so they can get off their blood pressure medicines," she said.

"It just goes to show that you don't have to be pumping, pumping, pumping to stay healthy."

For many adults, any activity has been proven to be beneficial.

"Studies now are showing that sitting is worse for the body than smoking," Sanderson said. "We try to get them to at the very least stand up and walk around."

Both Jacobs and Sanderson said the Parks and Recreation programs are successful in large part due to the highly qualified instructors, many of whom have been teaching their classes for years.

"The instructors we have are excellent and they will work with you," Senior/Recreation Supervisor Cathy Sylvester said. "They gear their classes so everybody can do it."

"The biggest things are your health and being social, and that's what we offer."
– Denise Sanderson

Each class that Parks and Recreation offers can be modified to best suit each individual.

"With all these exercise programs, you work at your own pace," Sanderson said.

Many modifications are made in the other set of classes the department offers that are for all ages, such as karate, yoga and tennis.

The karate classes are available in beginner, intermediate and advanced levels and are open to both children and adults. According to Sylvester, the instructor has been teaching with Parks and Recreation for 30 years.

"He has a strong following," she said. "Since all ages can take this, people often take it with their kids. It's a good way to keep the whole family involved."

The department also offers all-ages yoga led by Virginia Hilton.

"She's been with us at least 15 years and she's got quite the following, so her classes are usually full," Sylvester said. "Virginia's very good at what she does."

The department has also partnered with the Tennis and Fitness Center of Rocky Hill to provide tennis lessons. Residents can register for beginners courses through Parks and Recreation and take their classes at the indoor facility on Elm Street.

"We run tennis lessons there all year," Jacobs said. "They also have their own program, but you can also register through us for basic tennis lessons and then you can move on to their classes."

Through all of the programs that the Parks and Recreation Department offers, those who work there hope to provide access to both fitness and fun at an affordable price.

"We keep the price as reasonable as possible," Jacobs said. "The money goes to the instructors and we don't boost prices above and beyond that."

"The biggest things are your health and being social, and that's what we offer," Sanderson said. **RHL**

For the full list of programs available, or to register for classes, visit rhparkrec.org or call 860-258-2772.

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Events spotlight

Holiday Fair

Nov. 21, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
St. James Church parish hall
767 Elm St.
860-529-8655 or stjamesrh.org
Get into the holiday spirit while shopping at the various crafters and vendors, pick up a gift from the silent auction or teacup auction, or make a purchase from the ornament tree. Returning features include a cookie walk and bake sale. Also returning is the Marketplace featuring homemade pies and pepperoni bread. Admission is free.

Festival of Lessons and Carols

Dec. 13, 4 p.m.
St. James Church
767 Elm St.
860-529-2867
The St. James Music Ministry and Lectors are sponsoring this Festival of Lessons and Carols. Lessons and Carols is a service of Scripture and song that dates to the late 19th century. In this hour-long service, congregants listen to nine short Scripture readings, or "lessons," which recount the fall, the promise of a Messiah, the incarnation, and the Great Commission to preach the Good News. Each lesson is followed by a carol or other song that reflects on the lesson's message and a brief prayer.

Griswoldville Chapel Annual Holiday Worship Service

Dec. 12, 3 p.m.
The Griswoldville Chapel, Wethersfield
The worship committee has invited Rev. Walsh to welcome and lead the service. This event has attracted a large number of attendees, who look forward to getting together to keep the tradition of the chapel going. The chapel was built to serve the Griswoldville residents as a place of worship, because it was too far to go to the center of town by horse and buggy over dirt roads. Come and meet neighbors and friends at this short, traditional service. Coffee and sweets will be served along with the traditional sing-a-long.

Night of Joy!

Dec. 11-13
Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church, 511 Maple St.
Kick off the Christmas season at the Night of Joy! Christmas Concerts. This year's concert features many of the church's best in-house musicians including soloists, the WEFC band, as well as adult and kids choirs. Music is performed in a variety of styles from pop to gospel, classical to jazz and includes familiar Christmas carols as well as newer songs of the season. The evening is topped off with a reception complete with holiday treats. Concerts are Friday, Dec. 11 at 7 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 12 at 4 and 7 p.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 13 at 4 p.m. Admission is free; however, tickets are required as space is limited. Call 860-563-8286 or register at www.wethefc.com. To help friends and neighbors in need this winter, the church will be accepting monetary donations for its Hands Open Wide food pantry. **RHL**

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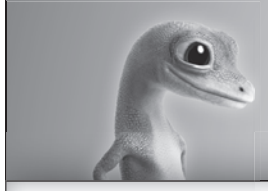
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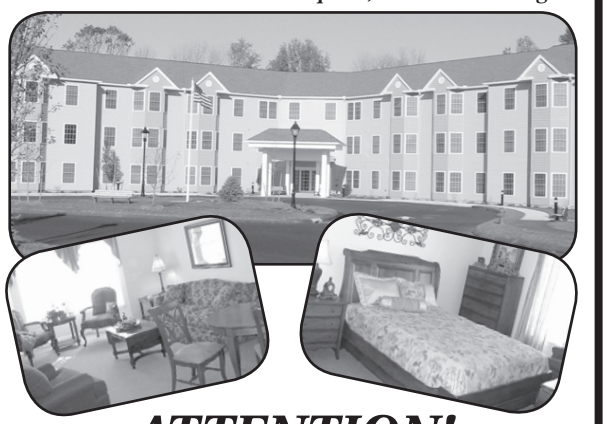
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LIFE *in the kitchen*

with chef Ricardo Grandos of On the Border

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Photo by Mara Dresner

Ricardo Granados is a native of Mexico City. He's been working at On the Border for more than a decade.

Ricardo Granados has been cooking ever since he was a boy growing up in Mexico City.

"When I was little, probably around 6, I used to help my mom cook. Sometimes my mom would go away to visit [family] out of state," he said.

"I stayed home and I was the one in charge of cooking for my brother and my father. It was all authentic Mexican food."

That included a lot of soups, as well as chicken and seafood dishes.

"We had all the proteins we have here over there. We had a lot of different sauces, a lot of different vegetables. My mom used to work as a maid. That's how she learned some of the different dishes," said Granados, who is the kitchen manager at On the Border.

"I learned from some relatives, my grandmother. It was really old style. We were poor. It wasn't that fancy. We didn't need any protein to be a really good dish."

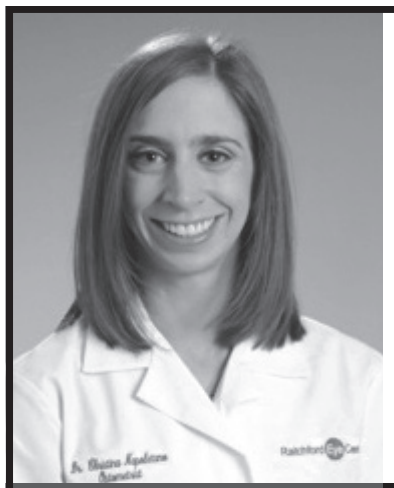
Granados moved to Connecticut when he was 21, joining an uncle who was living here. He immediately found a job in the restaurant business.

"I came over here and went straight to work. I was a dishwasher for at least a year. There were a lot of cooks in the kitchen that [taught] me. There were a couple of guys that really taught me a lot. I like to learn a lot," he said.

He worked at the Mansfield Hollow Restaurant in Willimantic, which featured French, Italian and American food. He next went to Marlborough Pizza Restaurant, where he worked the line before being put in charge of the kitchen, where his duties included developing the weekend specials.

Granados moved on to Manchester Pizza & Grill.

"That was a big restaurant



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with a big banquet room. They do a lot of deliveries. The gentleman who used to own it was very good. What I loved in that kitchen was all the equipment. You didn't even have to think about it," he said.

He also enjoyed how the restaurant only used fresh herbs, such as fresh basil, rosemary and oregano.

"It cost some money, [but] it makes a lot of difference," he said.

To learn as much as possible, Granados used to volunteer his skills when visiting friends at their restaurants locally. He also sometimes would eat out and go home and try to recreate the dishes.

"I was just learning from all their places," Granados said. "Where my family comes from, I don't remember in my life going to a restaurant."

The cuisine is different in each area of Mexico.

"They cook something different in the other states. I was able to visit quite a few states in Mexico," he said.

About 13 years ago, he joined On the Border. He started off as a cook before being promoted to a key supervisor.

After two years he was promoted to his current position, a job that makes use of both his culinary skills and his supervisory experience that he had gained working for companies such as FedEx.

"We try to get close to authentic," said the Glastonbury resident.

"We have real good tacos, we have real good enchiladas. Our top-selling [item] is [mesquite-grilled] fajitas. When you drive by the restaurant, you can smell the mesquite."

Granados said the restaurant maintains quality because so much of its food is made on site.

"You control your food quality when you make a lot of stuff yourselves," he said.

"We prep in the morning. The enchiladas, we make them as we go. The tortillas are fresh every day. The chips are always made fresh. The salsa is made fresh every day. The empanadas are little pastries with taco meat and cheese or chicken and cheese filling, we make them fresh every morning," he added.

"Our fajitas are cooked to order. Our beans, we cook our beans every day. Some places get them in the cans; no, we cook them. Guacamole, we have fresh avocados all the time. We cook all the protein as you order it; nothing is pre-made."

Granados works long hours.

"Sometimes, I go home at 2 o'clock in the morning and come back at 8. People say, 'How do you do it?' It's just me," he said.

"I like to be cooking all the time. I enjoy working with the employees, too. When I cook with them, I like to have fun with them and listen to their feedback. I like passionate people. I like to have fun."

He wants the diners to share in that.

"I like the guests to be happy. I like to make a beautiful plate. I like to make it enjoyable for the guests," he said.

"I like to get the 'wow.' Sometimes I don't want to sell a dish, it looks so good. I think they will have a great dining experience with us." **RHL**

On the Border is located at 1519 Silas Deane Highway. Call 860-899-1670 or see ontheborder.com.

Chef Ricardo Granados answered 10 questions for more insight on his personality and know-how.

Q: What's your "secret weapon" ingredient?
A: I think just my own taste.

Q: What's your least favorite food?
A: I eat everything. I'm the person who will try everything.

Q: What is the one cooking technique everyone should know how to do?
A: Get to know what goes with what.

Q: If you could take any celebrity chef out to dinner, who would it be and where would you take them?
A: Bobby Flay, to his Bar Americain [at Mohegan Sun]

Q: What is your favorite cookbook of all time?
A: I don't really read cookbooks, to be honest.

Q: If you weren't a chef, what profession would you be?
A: Definitely I would a civil engineer. I love math, I love science.

Q: What spice or herb best describes your personality?
A: Basil.

Q: What's your "go to" staple/recipe/dish?
A: I don't have a specific [dish]. Sometimes when I don't know [what to make] I cook … paella, pasta, eggs.

Q: What do you like to cook when having guests to your home?
A: I like to cook Mexican dishes, something they haven't eaten. I want to try to surprise them. I make shrimp cocktail, but we make it different. We make the marinade for 24 hours; those are pretty good.

Q: It's your last meal on earth. What's on your plate?
A: Something I want to make over here and never have the chance. My mom used to make for my birthday a steak with this kind of sauce. To be honest, I don't remember what kind of pepper. The sauce was brownish purple. When I go to Mexico, I would ask her to make it. It was the best.

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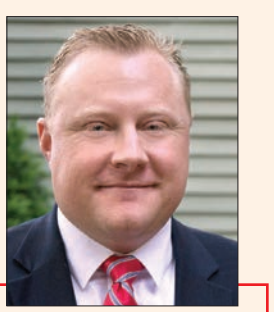

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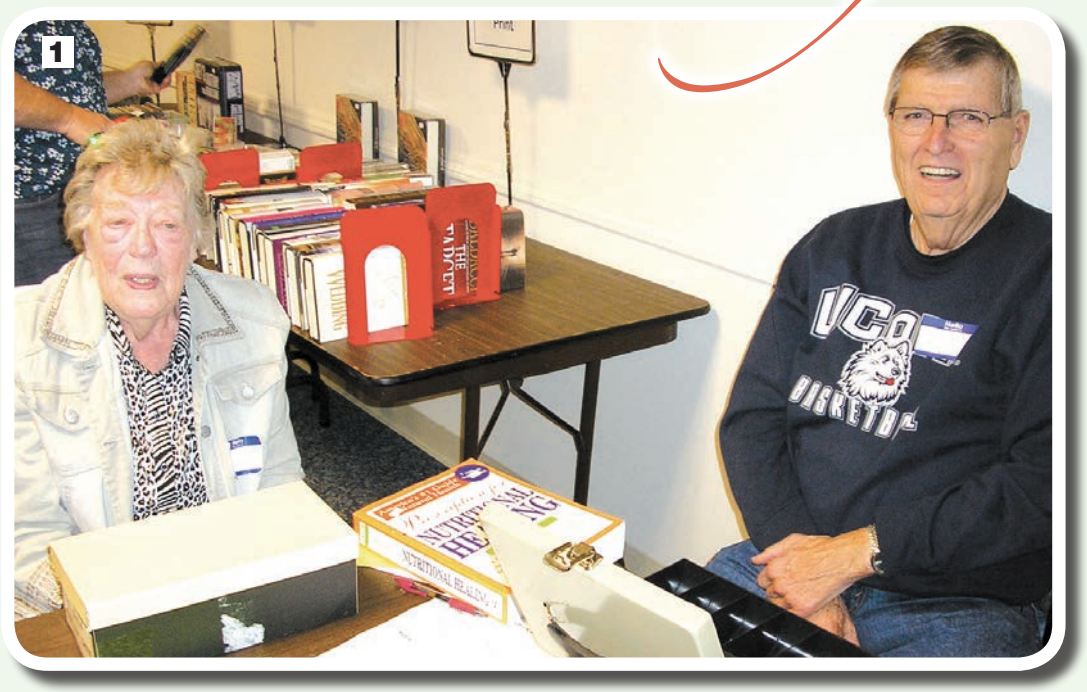
Slice of LIFE

photos by Mark Jahne



The Friends of the Cora J. Belden Library held their annual fall book sale the weekend of Nov. 7-8. A large variety of books in all genres and for all ages was available at bargain prices.

Friends of the Library Book Sale

1. Ruth Meister and Don Pitkin served as cashiers. **2.** Friends volunteer Erin Schulenberg straightens out the stacks in the mystery thriller section. **3.** Ben Famiglietti and Cristina LoGuidice volunteered to help out at the sale. They are members of the National Honor Society at Rocky Hill High School. **4.** Shoppers peruse the large numbers of books for sale. **5.** Elise Daniel, left, and Lasita Bowen found several books to their liking. **6.** Liz Hewett, left, is treasurer of the Friends of the Cora J. Belden Library. Ann Dobmeier is president of the organization. **7.** Terri Melo and John Urban also took turns at the cashier table.

4

Mystery Thriller
Mystery Thriller
Mystery Thriller

5

Picture Books

6

Ann Dahmeier
Friends

7

FALLFEST

The annual Fallfest celebration returned Oct. 17, highlighted as always by a bonfire and fireworks display. Hundreds of people came out to enjoy the festivities that mark the changing of the seasons.

A fall festival wouldn't be complete without the perfunctory hay ride.

Members of the Rocky Hill Volunteer Fire Department were on hand to promote fire safety.

Live music was provided by Peat Moss and the Fertilizers on the amphitheater stage.

photos by Mark Jahne

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Rory and his brothers Ronnie and Renny are white rats. Just two months old, they are highly social and inquisitive and don't mind being handled. They would make great pets for a young family because, other than social time with their human friends, they happily live in a cage. That means children and other pets are OK. CHS staff said rats are less likely to nip or bite than gerbils or hamsters. **RHL**

Inquiries about adoption may be made at the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Road, Newington. Call 860-594-4500. More information, including videos, can be found online at cthumane.org. Click on "Adopt" and "Newington." The Connecticut Humane Society is a private organization and has no time limits for adoption.

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News roundup

Democrats win election

Democrats recaptured control of the mayor's office and Town Council that they lost two years ago to the Republican ticket named "Team Henry." New Mayor Claudia Baio, a Democrat, defeated incumbent Henry Vasel by less than 100 votes and her party now enjoys a 5-4 council majority.

Other Democrats elected to the council are incumbent Joseph Kochanek Jr., former mayor Anthony LaRosa, and newcomers William O'Sullivan and John Emmanuel. The town charter allows Vasel to bump down to a council seat, where he will sit alongside fellow Republicans Nadine Bell, Catherine Vargas and Frank Szeps.

The GOP managed to maintain a 5-4 majority on the Board of Education. Elected to serve were Republicans Frank Morse, Jennifer Simboski Allison, Brian Dillon, Danielle Alfano Plona and Dilip Desai and Democrats Rene "Skip" Rivard, Laurie Boske, Maria Mennella and Barry Goldberg.

Also on the ballot were a pair of referendum questions. The first asked voters to spend $6.45 million on fire apparatus and other equipment, modern police dispatch and radio systems and other improvements related to public safety. It was approved by a more than 2:1 margin.

The second question asked voters to approve various changes to the town charter and was also approved by a wide margin.

Historical society is busy

There's a lot going on at the Rocky Hill Historical Society. Ed Chiucarello, who also serves as a trail manager for the town Parks and Recreation Department and is known as the "Rocky Hill Hiker," was appointed the society's program chairman.

The society recently welcomed three new members: Linda Bosnak, Albert Lepore and Howard Smith. It is looking for high school students who are interested in performing community service or research at its Academy Hall museum.

1

A total of $2,024.60 was raised at its Oct. 24 tag sale, coordinated by Nancy Bertwell. It was the historical society's most successful annual fall tag sale to date.

Kissing a llama

1 Students at West Hill School were entertained by some special visitors the afternoon of Oct. 16. Country Quilt Llama Farm brought a llama named Jack to the school as part of a program called "Hooked on Llamas."

Principal Scott Nozik and former mayor Henry Vasel had promised to kiss the llama if the children met their summer reading goals. The students read more than 7,000 books, so the two men smooched Jack while wearing red pajamas, a challenge inspired by the book "Llama Llama Red Pajama" by Anna Dewdney.

The number of books read over the summer was an all-time high. As an additional reward, the top three readers from each grade level were invited to pet Jack. Keeping with the animal theme, each classroom received a stuffed animal at the assembly, courtesy of the World Wildlife Federation.

Library showcases art

Local artists and art lovers now have a new reason to visit the Cora J. Belden Library. The library has set up its first professional art exhibit and is looking to schedule a new display each month.

Jennifer Misseri of Jennifer Leigh Photography is currently displaying her art in the library. Many of her photographs were taken with a macro lens, which engages the audience, bringing the viewer up close to the subject. Eleven of her photographs are on display until the end of November.

The art exhibits are the latest

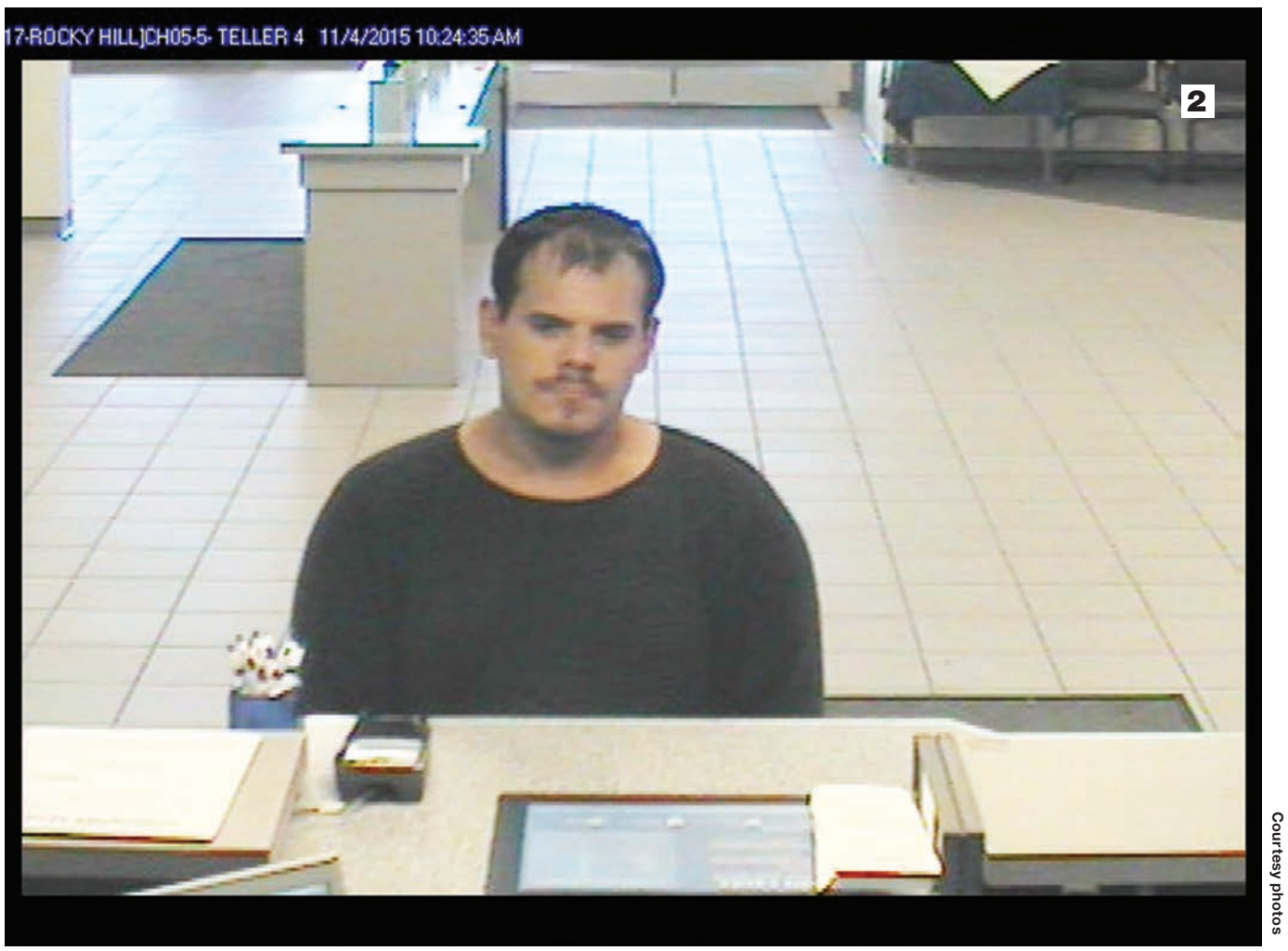
in the programs that support the library's role as a community center. The new display area has been set up with a track system and approximately 15 pieces can be exhibited at a time, depending on the size of the pieces.

Police seek bank robber

2 Rocky Hill police are looking for a man who robbed the Webster Bank branch at 377 Cromwell Ave. The crime occurred at 10:32 a.m. Nov. 4 and the suspect fled with an undetermined amount of money.

The suspect (see photo) is described as a white male between 5' 10" and 6 feet tall, 30 or so years old, with dark brown hair, brown eyes, scruffy facial hair and a slight goatee. His weight is estimated at between 230 and 250 pounds.

Police said he passed the teller a slip with written instructions demanding money. No weapon was shown or implied. Anyone with information about this crime is asked to contact Lt. Robert Catania at 860-258-7640 or rcatania@rockyhillct.gov. **RHL**



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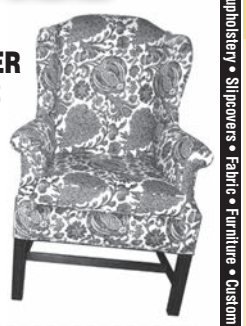

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Mirella, Mary Anne, Joan, Dan Cynthia and Karen

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ROCKY HILL $199,900
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Tom Pia (860) 305-8826

CROMWELL $329,900
CONTEMP Walls of windows, generous rooms, seasonal river views. Secluded park-like setting. Poss In-law.
Marie Padilla (860) 205-2655

ROCKY HILL $210,000
END UNIT Large Townhouse. Full basement, garage, 2 bdrms plus 1st flr den. 2 ½ baths! Deck to serene yard.
Ann Giangrave (860) 539-4674

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WETHERSFIELD $269,000
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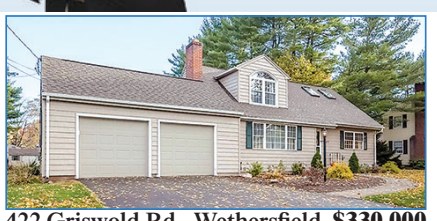
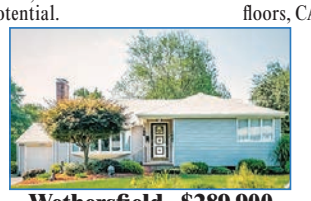


422 Griswold Rd., Wethersfield $330,000
4-5 BR Col/Cape in the Highcrest School district. Flexible floor plan, hardwood floors, 2 car attached garage. Unlimited potential.

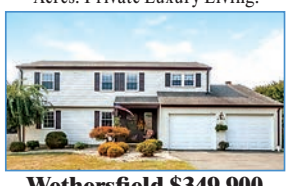
15 Monticello Dr., Wethersfield $424,900
4 BR, ALL brick Colonial with front portico located on almost an acre of land. Spacious rooms, hardwood floors, CAIR, newer roof & windows.

Wethersfield $739,500
75 Thornbush Road
Custom Col w/porte cochere, indr pool, 2 staircases, 6 car gar. on 1.75 Acres. Private Luxury Living.



Wethersfield $289,900
158 Dudley Road
3 BR Ranch w/attchd gar, CAIR, renovated kit, LR & DR, newer windows. Landscaped yard. Move-in ready!

Wethersfield $319,900
20 Sage Road
Location! 4 BR Col w/attached garage on cul-de-sac. Ready today!



Wethersfield $349,900
254 Fox Hill Road
5 Bdrm Col in the Highcrest School district on lrge level nghbrhd lot! Open eat in kit w/addit. sitting area, FP fam rm opens to a more recent snrm addition. Add 500sf in LL.

Wethersfield $2,700,000
185 Broad Street
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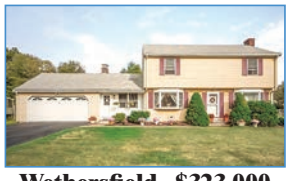
Wethersfield $259,900
255 Crest Street
Affordable, move in condition! Col w/2 car garage, hardwood floors and newer roof. Walk-out lower level. Call Mary @860-543-0944.



Wethersfield $323,000
62 Back Lane
Col w/3 Bdrms & 2 1/2 bths, ren kit, inside access to 2 car gar. Enclosed porch & fin lower level. Gas, baseboard heat & CAIR. Convenient to schools, restaurants & highway access.

Wethersfield $409,000
5 Old Mill Road
Spacious, mint condition Col in Highcrest School district. Renovated kit opens up to fam rm w/gas fp, raised hearth & slider to deck. Newer rf & CAIR. Quality upgrades!

Rocky Hill $574,900
55 Murphy Drive
Custom built Energy-Star Col, located in sought after west-end nghbrhd. Open flr plan, 9 foot ceilings. First flr MB suite. Eat-in kit opens to fam rm w/gas frplc. Formal dining & living rms. Impressive staircase. New furnace & CAIR. Location!

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A Change to Embrace

David Killeen joins Embrace Home Loans as Loan Officer

Embrace Home Loans is pleased to announce that David Killeen has joined their Rocky Hill, Connecticut branch as a Loan Officer. Killeen brings with him 15 years of experience in retail mortgage lending. Prior to joining Embrace, Killeen was Associate Vice President for Springfield Teachers Credit Union. Starting first as Sales Account Manager, Killeen quickly assumed the role of Branch Sales Manager in charge of business development. Ranking consistently among the top 10 account executives in the Northeast, Killeen managed multiple branches, increasing sales and improving customer service for the credit union's members.

Asked why he chose to move to Embrace now, Killeen responded, "I was impressed with the professionalism and competitive nature of the employees. The training, support and infrastructure are in place to provide loan officers with the information they need in a timely fashion. Embrace has a culture of success where I know I can thrive."

Killeen is optimistic about current market conditions. "Slow steady growth, low interest rates and price stabilization makes this a good time for first time home buyers."

Killeen was born in Springfield, Massachusetts and grew up in Longmeadow, MA where her resides today.

David Killeen NMLS# 33251, is employed by Embrace Home Loans and is licensed in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

About Embrace Home Loans: Founded in 1983, Embrace Home Loans is a direct lender for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, approved by FHA and VA, and an issuer for Ginnie Mae. Embrace Home Loans has remained a prominent leader in the industry, having helped hundreds of thousands of individuals and their families purchase new homes, lower their monthly payments and consolidate high-interest debt since its inception. For more information, please visit www.embracehomeloans.com.

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Contact David Killeen for all your mortgage needs at 413.636.5162 or dkilleen@embracehomeloans.com

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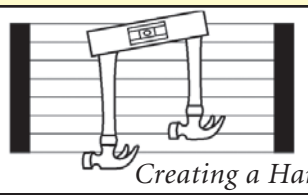

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Editorial

A time to give thanks, not to whine

Americans love to complain. We whine about politics, the economy, the weather, our annoying relatives, the cost of food, the cost of electricity, the cost of everything.

We love our sports teams – unless they lose. Then we carry on about how the coach and all the players should be replaced by others who will win more frequently.

We complain about our parents and our spouses and our kids, the people we supposedly love. And let's not forget about our jobs. Is there even one boss in the United States who does anything right?

It's our God-given right to carry on ad nauseam about anything and everything we don't like. It's one of the amendments to the Constitution, isn't it?

It is, sort of, if one lists it under the First Amendment and the right to free speech. But it sure gets tiring for those of us who have to listen to all that blather.

Even at its worst moments, this country still has more to offer than any other on earth. No other government and society is built on such a foundation of promoting and protecting individual freedoms.

We may not like the price of food, but at least there is plenty of it in the supermarket. We may not like the cost of electricity, but at least we can depend on it 24/7 unless there is a powerful storm that knocks down the wires for a few days.

In some countries you can go to jail for criticizing political leaders. Here you can go on talk radio or Twitter. Forget football or baseball, ranting about politics is rapidly becoming the national sport.

Thanksgiving is right around the corner with Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year's close behind. These are holidays that emphasize happiness and brotherhood. There are spiritual elements as well for those who choose to celebrate them.

Let's all tone down the whining for the next six weeks and try to share a smile instead of a critique. Let's all try getting into the spirit of the season and appreciate what we have instead of what we lack.

If politics upsets you, don't watch that portion of the news. If the boss is a jerk, concentrate on the co-workers you like instead. Make the time to spend with friends and family.

If you insist on expressing that right to rant, feel free to start again on Jan. 2. But until then let's all give our friends, family members and co-workers a break. **RHL**

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Snap a photo around town, share it on Instagram, and you might see it in these pages.

December calendar

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

1 **Career Counseling,** 10 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Dec. 8, 15, 22 and 29,

Knitting Group, 11 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 8, 15, 22 and 29

Creative Writing, 4:15 p.m., for grades 3-5, Cora J. Belden Library

CT Hearing Voices Network support group, 7 p.m., Rocky Hill Congregational Church, 805-817 Old Main St., second floor classroom, 203-391-4968, also Dec. 8, 15, 22 and 29

Lexington Estates, 6 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

2 **Playgroup Plus,** 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 9, 16, 23 and 30

Minecraft Club, 5:30 p.m., for grades 6-12, Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 9, 16 and 30

Mystery Book Discussion, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

3 **La Leche League,** 10 a.m. to noon, 23 Textbook Ave., 860-529-2307 or mgubala@sbcglobal.net

ESL Class, 10:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 10 and 17

Family Make It, Take It, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 10 and 17

4 **Art Start,** 10:30 a.m., for ages 2 and older, Cora J. Belden Library

5 **Annual Holiday Fair,** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Rocky Hill United Methodist Church, 623 Old Main St., 860-529-2442 or rockyhillumc@gmail.com

7 **Cars & Trucks & Things That Go: Story Time & Craft**, 10:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library

8 **Minecraft Club,** 4 p.m., for grades 3-5, Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 22

Traveling to Thailand, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

9 **Alzheimer's or Dementia Caregivers Support Group**, 6 p.m., The Atrium at Rocky Hill, 1160 Elm St., 860-563-5588 or ehall@bench-markquality.com

Get Started with Electronics, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

Friends of the Library Board Meeting, 7 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

12 **Polar Express Story Hour,** 10:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also 6:30 p.m. Dec. 21 and 23

Alzheimer's or Dementia Caregivers Support Group, 2 p.m., The Atrium at Rocky Hill, 1160 Elm St., 860-563-5588 or ehall@bench-markquality.com

Book Wars, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

13 **Festival of Lessons and Carols**, 4 p.m., St. James Church, 767 Elm St., 860-529-2867

14 **Holiday Crafts & Cookies for Adults,** 1 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

15 **Penguin Story Time & Craft,** 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library

Read with Toby the certified therapy dog, 4 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

16 **Teen Anime Club**, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

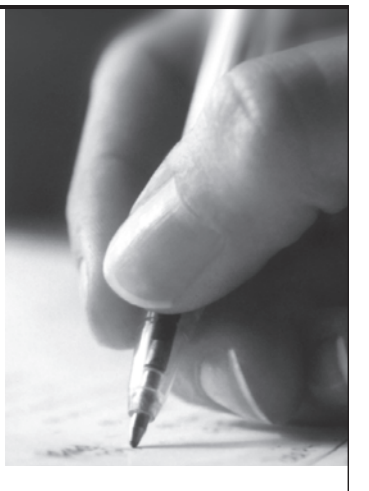
18 **LEGO Free Play**, 10:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library

Is your club, community organization, school or house of worship holding an event open to the general public? If so, please send us the details for inclusion in our calendar. Email your events to Mark Jahne at mjahne@turleyct.com or mail them to Turley CT Community Publications, 540 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070.

Letters Policy

LIFE welcomes letters to the editor from our readers. Letters may be sent via traditional mail or e-mail. A full name and street address are required for publication.

Please include your telephone number for verification purposes. Letters should not exceed 300 words, and are subject to editing for accuracy, clarity, spelling, grammar, brevity and taste.



Mail letters to 540 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 0670 or email Mark Jahne, at mjahne@turleyct.com.

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Announcement

The Contemporary Muse Art Gallery, located at Building 2, Riverdale Farms, opens its doors for November and December holiday purchases. Four local women artists feature their original artwork, offering a great variety of subjects, media and styles. For information and directions visit riverdalefarmsshopping.com. Please join us during hours or happily by appointment!

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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]

From Autumn, to Winter...

After a stunning show of colors this fall across Connecticut, it's time for winter – but what will the season hold for us, this time?

Making big headlines: El Nino, and the fact that this year's is one of the strongest on record. It's the warming of the Pacific Ocean that can have a big influence on large scale weather patterns. Typically with a strong El Nino, in our part of the country, we can expect a milder but also wetter than normal season.

There are many other factors that play into a long-range outlook. Also remember that while it very well could, on average, be warmer than normal... we can still get outbreaks of very cold air. Adding to the complexity is determining the frequency of storms and how intense they will be in Connecticut.

Speaking of storms, in case you're not familiar, WFSB has been naming winter storms since 1971 (back to the days of the Travelers Weather Service). It's a tradition WFSB is proud to carry on here in the state of Connecticut, now in its 5th decade!

A storm has to meet certain criteria in order to be named: we must expect at least 6 inch of snow for much of the state, and/or ½ inch of ice accretion (that would be a significant ice storm). Given we are going into a presidential election year, the theme for this season will be former First Ladies! **RHL**

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